HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN THE

XVIII^TH CENTURY

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A

HISTORY OF ENGLAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

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HISTORY OF ENGLAND

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CHAPTER XVII.

The period of the King's recovery has been described, probably with truth, as that in which the fortunes of Pitt attained their acme. There was indeed a later period when his opponents became much fewer than in 1789, but the horizon was then thickly overcast with foreign dangers; the extreme hopefulness which characterised the early years of the Administration had passed away, and admitted failures and popular discontent threw dark shadows over the prospect. Less than four years had to run their course before the great French war broke upon England, and for some time before that event the proceedings in France had produced a general indisposition to reform. Yet in these years something of importance was done, and some great questions were at least raised which it shall be the object of this chapter to examine.

Several years had elapsed, during which no questions relating to religious liberty had been brought before Parliament. I have shown, in former volumes of this work, the slow but steady progress which had been made

towards the abolition of the chief grievances of the Protestant Dissenters and of the Catholics; and the spirit of the time, and especially the prevailing tone of the law courts, did much to discourage any attempts to enforce such remnants of intolerance as remained. But the grievance of the Test and Corporation Acts, though much mitigated by the Annual Indemnity Acts, was still felt by the Protestant Dissenters, and at a meeting held in London, in the beginning of 1787, the deputies of the three great denominations—the Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists—agreed to bring it again before Parliament. Their claim had been considerably strengthened by the repeal of the Test Act in Ireland in 1779, and also by the warm support which they had given to Pitt in the critical election of 1784, and they wisely entrusted their cause to Mr. Beaufoy, a member of the Church of England and a steady supporter of the ministry. He brought it before Parliament in speeches of remarkable ability in 1787 and 1789. Having recounted the well-known history of the Acts that were complained of, having dilated upon the acknowledged, unvarying and zealous attachment which from the time of the Revolution the Dissenters had shown to the dynasty and the Constitution, he proceeded to give a startling account of the disabilities and penalties to which, by the strict letter of the law, they were still liable. They could hold no commission in the army or navy, no civil office, no seat in a corporation, no corporate office; they could not take part in the direction of the Bank of England, of the Indian, or Russian, or South Sea, or Turkish companies though their whole fortune might be invested in these stocks. Any Dissenter convicted of having accepted any of these offices, who still refused to qualify by taking the Anglican sacrament, was not only liable to a heavy fine, with the alternative of imprisonment, but was also, "like the worst of criminals, placed

almost beyond the protection of the law. He was disabled for the rest of his life from bringing any action in law, from prosecuting any suit in any court of equity, from being guardian to any child, from being an executor, from receiving a legacy. In 1745, when the enemy was marching into the heart of England, and when the Government was in the utmost danger, a great body of Protestant Dissenters took arms for its defence. Their reward was a special Act of Grace pardoning them for the offence they had committed.

It was true that these laws were in some respects constantly violated, and that Annual Acts of Indemnity were passed to shelter those who violated them; but Beaufoy was able to show that these Acts were far from being a complete and effectual protection to men who had accepted office, and who were determined at no time to take the Anglican sacrament. It was pretended that these penalties were necessary for the protection of the Established Church. But no such protection for the Established Church existed either in Scotland or Ireland. The Roman Catholic, whose hostility to all Protestant Churches, and the Quaker, whose hostility to all religious establishments, might be justly feared, were already excluded from power and office by the oaths of supremacy and allegiance. The other Dissenters were few, diminishing, and, for the most part, singularly unfanatical; and by a strange fatuity the Legislature, which pronounced it dangerous to allow them to be tide-waiters, or directors of the Turkish company, allowed them to sit in Parliament and to exercise the franchise.

Turning to another aspect of the subject, Beaufoy expatiated with great force and eloquence on the extreme profanity of these laws. They did not, it is true, stand alone. The Legislature, by its reckless and lavish multiplication of oaths, 'by compelling every petty officer of the revenue and every collector of turnpike tolls to swear

deeply on his admission into office, has made the crime of perjury more frequent than it ever before was in any age or country.' In the Sacramental Test, however, there was a profanity which was almost worse than perjury. 'The Saviour of the world instituted the Eucharist in commemoration of His death—an event so tremendous that afflicted Nature hid herself in darkness; but the British Legislature has made it a qualification for gauging beer-barrels and soapboilers' tubs, for writing Custom House dockets and debentures, and for seizing smuggled tea.' History furnishes no other example of the Legislature of a country deliberately, and by express enactment, prostituting the most sacred ordinance of their own faith, converting the temple into an antechamber to the excise office, degrading the altar into a qualification desk for tax-gatherers and public extortioners, and pleading as a reason for this impious defilement the interests of the Church. How could a clergyman be expected to fulfil his duty of rejecting from the sacred table open ill-livers, if they came only to fulfil a legal obligation, to qualify for offices which they had received from the Crown? As a matter of fact such men were never rejected; were it otherwise an action for damages would ensue. Nor is it surprising that the most conscientious clergyman should shrink from the responsibility that was imposed on him. 'Our fleet is preparing to sail; the enemy is already in the Channel; the officer appointed as our admiral is a man of the highest professional merit, and is called to the command by the general voice of the people. Debauched, however, in private life, living in avowed fornication, and notoriously profane, he approaches the holy table. If the sacrament be administered to him, in what situation is the clergyman? If it be refused, in what situation is the kingdom?'

The motion for the repeal of the Test and Corpora-

tion Acts at once divided the chiefs of the Opposition. North, who was now nearly blind, and very infirm, came down to oppose it, and on both occasions he spoke against it with a strong accent of sincerity. The principle, he maintained, that all offices of power should be entrusted to men who either belonged to or were, at least, not actively hostile to the Established Church, is essential to its security, and an Established Church is an essential part of the British Constitution. When James II. conspired against the religion and liberty of the English people, he did so chiefly by introducing into office men who were hostile to both; and the Test Act contributed largely to his defeat. In absolute monarchies, like France or Prussia, where the sovereign may at any moment remove officials, it may perhaps be safe to promote men who are not in harmony with the dominant religion; but in a limited monarchy such promotions will always be dangerous to the Church. Fox, on the other hand, while reproaching the Dissenters with having, in the election of 1784, abandoned the principles of liberty, strongly and eloquently supported their claim. He had no difficulty in showing that the existing legislation amounted to a penalty, and a very serious penalty, imposed on a particular class for their conscientious adherence to their religion, and that this class was in morals one of the most respectable, in political antecedents one of the most meritorious in England.

Speaking of the alleged dangers to the Church, he said that, in his opinion, every country should have an Established Church, and that Church ought to be the Church of the bulk of the people. The establishment of the Kirk in Scotland and of Episcopalianism in England rested on this firm foundation. It was very unlikely that anything but a great change of opinions could shake them, and 'if the majority of the people of England should ever be for the abolition of the Established

Church, in such a case the abolition ought immediately to follow.'

The issue of the contest depended mainly on the attitude of Pitt. Personally he had not the smallest antipathy to Dissenters, or the faintest leaning towards intolerance; but he was not prepared to enter into a serious conflict with the Church for the purpose of removing disqualifications that were of little practical importance. He requested the Archbishop of Canterbury to collect the opinions of the bishops, and at a meeting held at the house of the archbishop the maintenance of the Acts was voted by ten to two.[1] Pitt determined therefore to throw out the motion of Beaufoy, but he did not attempt to answer all his arguments, and his speeches were of a kind that left it fully open to him, on another occasion, to change his course. He entirely agreed, he said, that religious opinions should never be restrained or limited by law, unless they were likely to prove a source of civil inconvenience. He warmly eulogised the Dissenters, but denied that the Acts that were complained of were of the nature of a stigma or a penalty. In all societies and constitutions there must be some restriction of right, some mode of qualification; and it is not unreasonable that governments should retain a discretionary power of excluding from offices of trust and influence men who, though personally in the highest degree respectable, are on principle opposed to the ecclesiastical side of the Constitution. The object of the Sacramental Test was not to make the offices to which it applied exclusively tenable by Churchmen, nor had it that effect. It was only to make it possible to exclude the comparatively small section of Nonconformists, who thought so ill of the Church, and were so disaffected to it, that they refused to communicate with it.[2] 'The

[1] Watson's *Anecdotes of his Own Time*. [2] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 509.

alliance of the Church and State is founded on expediency; this restriction is the price which the State pays the Church for it,' and its removal would certainly alarm a large and respectable section of the community. All over Europe the animosities and passions that spring from religious differences are subsiding, and in England there is now a happy quiet. But no policy is so likely to interrupt it as one which would revive the competition of sects, and thus rekindle the smouldering embers of their ancient virulence.

There was little in these speeches to discourage the Dissenters; and while Beaufoy was defeated in 1787 by 178 to 100, in 1789 he was only defeated by 122 to 102. If events had gone on in their accustomed course, it is probable that the Test Act would have been speedily abolished; but the French Revolution, and the wholesale confiscation of Church property, which was one of its first incidents, produced an immediate and a most powerful reaction. In 1790 the question was again introduced, and this time the Dissenters, not very judiciously, entrusted their motion to Fox, and thus gave it a more distinctly party complexion. Fox spoke with his accustomed eloquence and force, and was powerfully supported by Beaufoy; but it was evident that the conditions of the debate had changed. The language of Pitt was now that of decided and uncompromising hostility. There were constant allusions to what was passing in France, and the spirit of the House was manifestly hostile to the Dissenters.

The debate was especially remarkable for a speech of Burke, which discloses very clearly the manner in which events in France were influencing his mind. The profanation of the sacrament by employing it as a political test, which appears to have been viewed with perfect equanimity by the bishops and clergy, struck Burke as forcibly as Beaufoy, and he proposed another form of

test as a substitute. Of the Dissenters, as a body, he spoke temperately and generously. On the abstract question of religious tests he refused to argue. Abstract principles he said he had always detested, and, above all, abstract principles of natural right seemed to him among the most idle and useless topics that could be introduced into political discussion. They had long since been given up, when men for their mutual benefit formed themselves into societies and consented to accept the restrictions and limitations of the law. The real and sole question was, whether the test was expedient or the reverse. Ten years ago he would have readily voted for its repeal. In 1787 and 1789 he had left the House when the question was agitated, being unable to take any settled decision; now he was reluctantly convinced that the circumstances were such that a test must be maintained. He showed how Priestley, who was perhaps the chief writer of the Dissenters, had lately expressed his detestation of the Establishment and his determination to do all in his power to subvert it; how Price, who was the most popular preacher of the Dissenters, had in a well-known sermon warmly eulogised the recent events in France; how catechisms had been published and circulated by authority through the Dissenting bodies, breathing the strongest hostility to the Established Church, and he inferred that this was at present the acknowledged sentiment of their leading preachers. No proposition appeared to him more clear than that an Established Church was of vital importance to England, and he believed that at the present time there were strong and warrantable grounds for serious apprehension for its safety. Only two years ago, what hierarchy in Europe seemed safer or more powerful than that of France, and where was it now?

The weight that was attached to these considerations was clearly shown by the division. Fox was defeated

by no less than 204 to 105, and the current now flowed so strongly against the Dissenters that nearly forty years elapsed before the broad question of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts was again agitated, though Sir Gilbert Elliot, supporting a petition of the Scotch General Assembly, made an unsuccessful attempt in 1791 to exempt members of the Scotch Established Church from the provisions of the former Act.

A similar fate attended a very comprehensive Toleration Bill, which was introduced into the House of Lords in 1789 by Lord Stanhope. It was not intended to affect the Test and Corporation Acts, and Roman Catholics were expressly excluded from its operation; but it proposed to repeal a number of ancient and, for the most part, obsolete laws, which were plainly inconsistent with religious liberty, and to establish the principle that all persons except papists, who were excepted on account of their persecuting and dangerous principles, should have full liberty to teach and exercise their religion, and by speaking, writing, printing, and publishing to investigate religious subjects. In introducing it, Lord Stanhope gave an extremely curious account of the persecuting laws, that still remained on the statute book. The laws which he especially desired to repeal were those making attendance at divine service compulsory. By Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity, every person who, without reasonable and lawful cause, did not attend church, both on Sundays and holy days, might be fined one shilling for each occasion on which he was absent. By another law of Elizabeth the fine was raised to 20*l.* a month. By a third law, any person who obstinately refused to go to church was to be committed to gaol till he conformed; but if after three months he persisted in his refusal he was to be banished from the realm, his property was to be confiscated, and he was liable to death if he returned. Under James I.

it was provided that the fine of 20*l*. might be refused; that two-thirds of the lands of the offender might be taken instead; that every householder was liable to a fine of 10*l*. a month for every servant, visitor, or visitor's servant who abstained from church, and that informations, suits, or actions against those who did not attend church might be laid in any county and at the pleasure of any informer. The Toleration Act had indeed relieved Protestant Dissenters who believed in the Trinity from these penalties, by authorising their places of worship, but it did not include those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and it left those who from conscientious reasons, or from taste, abstained from attending any form of public worship liable to all the ancient penalties.

In addition to these laws, there were several others which Stanhope desired to repeal. The laws of Elizabeth rendering it compulsory to eat fish on fast days had expired, but to eat meat on fast days was still an ecclesiastical offence, punishable in ecclesiastical courts. The power of excommunication, with all the penalties I have enumerated in a former chapter, still remained. An Act of Charles II. still made any peer who went to Court, or remained in the King's presence, without having taken the Oath of Supremacy and Declaration against popery, a popish recusant, though it had become so perfectly obsolete that, as Stanhope observed, the whole bench of Protestant bishops had violated it. The Canons of 1603, breathing a spirit of implacable intolerance, were still believed to be binding on the clergy, and any writing which impugned the supernatural character of the Christian creed was a criminal offence.

The measure of Stanhope never reached the House of Commons, for it was thrown out in the Upper House on the second reading, chiefly through the opposition of the bishops. They could not, indeed, defend all the

Acts that it was proposed to repeal; but they protested against the sudden removal of so many ancient laws from the statute book, and inveighed in the strongest terms against the proposal to authorise men to abstain from any form of public worship, or to publish writings impugning the Trinity or the Christian faith. 'Such a measure,' said Bishop Horsley, 'would leave our mutilated Constitution a novelty in the annals of mankind, a prodigy in politics, a civil polity without any public religion for its basis.' It is indeed a singular and characteristic fact that the laws of Elizabeth making it a criminal offence not to attend public worship in England were not repealed until 1844 and 1846.[1]

The greater part of this legislation had no doubt become completely inoperative, and one of the most common complaints of the religious writers of the eighteenth century was the general and systematic neglect of public worship by a large section both of the upper and of the lower class.[2] It is impossible to write the history of English religious liberty with any accuracy from the statute book, for its different stages had often been attained in manners or practice long before they received the sanction of the law. On the other hand, several of these laws might be employed by individual fanaticism or private malevolence, and Stanhope was able to cite more than thirty cases in which persecuting laws about religion had been put in force during the twenty-six years before he spoke, sometimes against Roman Catholics, sometimes against Protestant Dissenters, sometimes against persons who simply abstained from going to church.[3] Nor can it be said that the evil was altogether a diminishing one. A great

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[1] See Stephen's *Hist. of the Criminal Law of England*, ii. 483.

[2] See much evidence of this in Abbey and Overton's *English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 457-459.

[3] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 114.

outburst of religious passion had accompanied the Methodist and Evangelical revival, and on the subject of Sunday observance a stricter code was coming into fashion. Sunday card parties now began to fall into disfavour.[1] There were already signs among the upper classes of a more regular attendance on public worship, which increased greatly a few years later owing to the panic which was produced by the French Revolution.[2] A declaration was largely signed binding the subscribers to observe Sunday strictly; to give and accept no entertainment on that day, to abstain from travelling on it except in cases of urgent necessity.[3] Bishop Porteus tried, though unsuccessfully, to induce George III. to suppress the Sunday bands at Windsor, Kensington, and Weymouth; and Wilberforce made an equally unsuccessful attempt to induce the Speaker to give up his custom of receiving members of the House of Commons on Sunday evenings.[4] There were bitter complaints that 'Sunday was selected' by the fashionable for travelling to their country seats or to the watering-places;' that 'on no other day do so many coaches with coronets pass through the country towns and villages;' that multitudes of the middle or poorer classes persisted in availing themselves of the facilities which improved roads and vehicles gave them for Sunday excursions,[5] and there was in some quarters an evi-

[1] Wilberforce, however, complained in 1787 that he was asked to one by a person high in the King's service.—*Life*, i. 133.

[2] See a curious account of the effect of the alarm produced by the Revolution on the religious deportment of the upper classes, in the *Annual Register*, 1798, pp. 229, 230.

[3] Hodgson's *Life of Porteus*, pp. 138, 139.

[4] Abbey and Overton's *English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 519; *Wilberforce's Life*, ii. 272.

[5] I have collected some facts about the early history of Sunday coaches (vol. iii. p. 15). A writer in 1765 deplores the increasing number of coaches travelling on Sunday. 'They are got to that height that there is not a stage within ten or twelve

dent disposition to enforce strictly the laws relating to Sunday, and even to extend their scope. In the winter of 1780 houses were opened in London for Sunday promenades, and for debating societies, in which religious questions were freely discussed, but the new entertainment was at once brought before Parliament by Bishop Porteus, and an Act was passed to suppress it.[1] Bishop Horsley, in opposing Stanhope's Bill, urged against it, as a decisive argument, that, if it passed, 'stage coaches and waggons will travel the road, watermen will ply upon the Thames, and hackney-coachmen in the streets upon the Lord's Day as upon any other, under the express sanction of the law.'[2] In 1784 Sir R. Hill suggested, among other taxes, Sunday tolls and a special tax on Sunday newspapers.[3] A society, imitated from the 'Societies for the Reformation of Manners,' which had been so active under Anne, was founded by Wilberforce and some other leading Evangelicals about 1787,

miles of London but what goes as regularly on that day as on the weekdays. The long stages are not suffered to do so, though the passengers travel out of necessity, but your Sunday traveller does it out of pleasure and many times to get drink. I have had an opportunity of observing at a town about ten miles from the city, that there are two stages set out on the weekdays, but on Sundays four or five in the summer time, most of them crowded both within and without.'—*Lloyd's Evening Post*, March 22-25, 1765. See too the *Connoisseur*, No. 26. In 1802 James Mill wrote from London: 'Another very fine sight is Hyde Park, especially on a Sunday, when all the nobility and gentry go to air themselves. You see thousands of carriages and horsemen, and the walks for miles filled with the finest dressed people.'—Bain's *James Mill*, p. 40. On the Sunday travelling of the upper classes, see the *Essays of Vicesimus Knox*, No. XX.

[1] 21 Geo. III. c. 49; Hodgson's *Life of Porteus*, pp. 71-83.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 127.

[3] Adolphus's *Hist. of England*, iv. 123. In 1799 Wilberforce made an unsuccessful attempt to carry a law suppressing Sunday newspapers. He pretends that Pitt was induced to refuse his support because three out of the four Sunday newspapers supported the Government.—Wilberforce's *Life*, ii. 338.

and spread widely over England, and one of its special objects was to enforce by prosecutions the existing laws against 'the profanation of the Sabbath,' and against 'licentious publications,' and to induce the magistrates in these matters to act with greater strictness and activity.[1] The Evangelical theology, which was now acquiring an ascendency in the most religious classes, was widely separated both in doctrine and in temperature from the school of Tillotson, and from the school of Hoadly. Salvation by belief, and the sinfulness of religious error, were held with a definiteness and an emphasis which had long been unknown in England, while the French Revolution produced among the upper classes an enormously increased estimate of the practical and political dangers that may result from speculative opinions.

In spite, however, of these influences, the spirit of English government in the eighteenth century was but slightly affected by theological considerations, and the great change which had in this respect been for some centuries in operation was almost completed. The old Catholic theory of the duties of government in matters of religion had been, in my opinion, perfectly logical and consistent. It rested on the doctrines of the infallibility of the Church and of the damnable criminality both of religious error and doubt. When governors believed themselves to be, beyond all possibility of mistake, in possession of absolute religious truth, and when they were equally certain that heresy in the sight of the Divinity was a crime entailing eternal damnation, they had no difficulty in believing that all the resources of government should be exerted in maintaining religious orthodoxy. If these resources can be efficaciously

[1] See Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 132-138; Hodgson's *Life of Porteus*, pp. 100, 101; Watson's *Anecdotes of his Own Time*, ii. 66.

employed without the possibility of error in the promotion of the highest of human interests, such an employment must be a duty, nor is there anything strange or startling in punishing with the heaviest known punishment a crime of the deepest possible dye and entailing the greatest possible calamities. To minds in this condition the butcheries of De Montfort, of Torquemada, or of Mary Tudor could give no greater shock than the execution of ordinary murderers. It was, indeed, early seen that the power of governments over opinion was not unlimited. A convinced heretic could not be really converted, though he might be turned into a hypocrite by penal laws. Persecution kindles a heroism of resistance. The martyr's death inspires many to follow in his steps; and when opinions have found a lodgment in the minds of a large section of a nation, it is not in the power of the civil authority to destroy them. But when all this is admitted, both reason and experience show that the power of government, when uncompromisingly employed in maintaining particular opinions, is enormously great. It may extirpate the most active centres of adverse propagandism. It may immensely restrict, if it cannot absolutely prevent, the circulation of opposing arguments or opinions. It may direct the whole gigantic force of education exclusively in one direction, and if it cannot prevent a change of doctrine, it may at least postpone it for generations. As a consequence of these principles, the maintenance of religious orthodoxy at home, and the support of religious orthodoxy abroad, were considered the most incontestable duties of government; and all tolerance of heresy, and all alliances with non-Catholic Powers, were deemed criminal.

With the Reformation, however, a new set of principles came into action; but it was only very slowly, and with innumerable logical inconsistencies, that they

triumphed. If private judgment is the basis on which all religious opinions must be founded, its free and honest exercise cannot, it was said, be a crime, but must be a duty and a right of the most sacred kind. Every influence of power which deflects or restricts it must be an evil. The unrestrained comparison of arguments and opinions is necessary to the discovery of truth, and as governments have no special means of knowing what is true they have no right to proscribe opinions. There grew up, too, among many a belief that great portions of very widely received opinions were doubtful, or untrue; that religious unity is not only impossible, but not even desirable, as different sets of opinion are specially adapted to different types of mind and stages of civilisation; that opinions may be theologically or historically untrue, and yet very conducive to human happiness and goodness. On the other hand, the more zealous adherents of the Protestant Churches neither admitted that there was any material uncertainty in their opinions, nor abandoned the doctrines of salvation by belief and of the criminality of religious error, and they endeavoured to reconcile them with their principle of private judgment by drawing a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines. The first were certain and essential to salvation, and they ought therefore to be enforced by law. The second were uncertain, comparatively unimportant, and the proper subject for toleration.

A number of political influences at the same time came into play, some of them acting in the direction of intolerance and some in the direction of religious liberty. Kings and parliaments inherited a great part of the spiritual power which had passed away from the Pope, and they naturally endeavoured to promote the more subservient Churches, to crush forms of belief which had revolutionary or anarchical tendencies, to

impose some check upon the disintegrating influences of Protestantism. The fierce antagonism between the Catholic Church and the Protestant communities was carried on not merely or mainly by argument or preaching, but by open war, rebellions, persecutions, conspiracies, and assassinations, and it made a great mass of coercive legislation a political necessity. Many of what were termed persecuting laws were intended in reality not to enforce or propagate opinions, but to guard against sedition or hostile political influences. On the other hand, one of the effects of the Reformation was to throw great masses of men of different creeds into juxtaposition, and it was necessary to arrive at some system under which they could live together in peace. Political necessities compelled nations of different religions to enter into close bonds of friendship and alliance; and as the religion which was in a minority in one country was in a majority in another, persecution had an obvious tendency to produce retaliation. Multitudes of refugees, also, drawn for the most part from the very flower of the industrial classes, were scattered by persecution over Europe, and it became a great object to attract them, which could only be done by giving them full liberty of practising their religion. As time rolled on, classes that were essentially secular in their spirit rose to power; material interests and political habits of thought began to dominate, and the theological temperature in Europe gradually cooled.

Under all these various and conflicting influences a large extension of toleration was slowly attained, and governments, by the force of circumstances, were compelled, or induced, to restrict their action to the temporal interests of mankind. Francis I, by allying himself with the Turks, Richelieu by allying himself with Protestants, Elizabeth by supporting Dutch Calvinists, terminated the system of exclusively orthodox

alliances. Grotius, while admitting that alliances with non-Christian Powers may be permitted in cases of extreme necessity, deplored bitterly the facility with which the governments of his day contracted them, to the great detriment of Christianity, and he recalled the history of an old Duke of Savoy, who is said to have lost Cyprus rather than accept the alliance of the Turks.[1] The Peace of Westphalia put an end to active political war between Protestants and Catholics, as such. In England an attempt had been made with much skill to maintain a religious uniformity in a national Church, partly by drawing up the formularies of that Church in such a way as to include men of widely different tendencies and opinions, and partly by coercive legislation directed against Nonconformists. This system, however, after many vicissitudes, completely broke down under the Stuarts, and was finally abandoned at the Revolution, when Presbyterianism was established in Scotland, and when most English Dissenters obtained a legal position through the Toleration Act. From this time it became a settled maxim of English politics that government is intended solely to promote the civil or temporal interests of the community, that the salvation of souls is not within its legitimate functions, and that in promoting or restricting religious tenets it should be governed altogether by a consideration of the effect of those tenets on the temporal happiness of mankind.

It is obvious that this is an essentially different theory from that which formerly prevailed; but it is also obvious that it is a theory which admits of many shades of actual policy. The points of contact between religion and the temporal interests of society are very numerous, and each can act upon the other in many obscure, complicated, and indirect ways. It was gene-

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[1] *De Jure Belli et Pacis*, book ii. c. xv.

rally admitted by the most accredited exponents of the principles of the Revolution that the establishment and endowment of one form of religion was fully within the proper functions of Government. Religion, considered as the supreme regulator of human conduct, passions, and motives, is of the very highest importance to the well-being of society. It gives law its moral sanction. It reinforces it by the prospect of infinite rewards and punishments administered by an Omniscient Judge. It extends the empire of duty over wide tracts of conduct and feeling which positive law can never touch. It is therefore a matter of the highest political and social importance that there should be in every parish an instructed clergyman, set apart for the purpose of carrying the teaching and the moralising influence of religion to all classes, especially to those who would never provide it for themselves. Nor was it forgotten that the alliance of Church and State enabled the governors in some measure to regulate and moderate a force which, though of inestimable value, is peculiarly liable to dangerous excesses and aberrations, and that it established a close union between the Government of the country and the strongest moral influence in society. In selecting, however, from among contending sects, the clergy who were to be entrusted with this function, the ruler is to consider not his own opinion, but that of the nation. The end to be attained is utility; and both Warburton and Paley strongly maintained that the Established Church should be that of the bulk of the nation.

The next question is whether, or to what extent, the power of governments may be legitimately employed in repressing religious opinions. Locke, who more than any other man framed the theory of the English Government of the Revolution, devoted his 'Letters on Toleration' chiefly to an examination of this question,

and he maintained with great force of reasoning that the suppression of opinion as being theologically erroneous, can never be within the legitimate sphere of Government, and that the free exercise of private judgment in matters of religion is a sacred and an inalienable right. At the same time, he contends that no opinions should be tolerated by the magistrate which make men necessarily hostile to the State, or which subvert those moral rules that are essential to the preservation of civil society. Under these denominations he would include both the papist and the atheist. No sect, he says, will openly maintain that men are not obliged to keep their promises, or that princes may be dethroned by those who differ from them in religion; but if a Church teaches that all who are not in communion with her are heretics, and that 'faith is not to be kept with heretics;' if it asserts that 'kings excommunicated forfeit their crowns and kingdoms;' if 'all those who enter into it do *ipso facto* deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince . . . who has not only power to persuade the members of his Church to whatsoever he lists, either as purely religious, or in order thereunto, but can also enjoin it them on pain of eternal fire,' the members of that Church have no right to claim toleration from a Government of another creed. Locke does not specifically state that these opinions are held by Roman Catholics, and he would have probably subscribed to the distinction which it was afterwards customary to make between Roman Catholics and papists; but the general application of his words cannot be mistaken. In speaking of atheists his language is still more decisive: 'Those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, commands, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The

taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all.'[1]

This letter was published in 1689. A substantially similar doctrine was maintained just fifty years later by Bishop Warburton, in that treatise on the 'Alliance of Church and State' which is perhaps the most really valuable of his works. Warburton lays down in the strongest terms the natural right of every man to worship God according to his conscience, and the criminality of every attempt on the part of the State to interfere with his religion. 'With religious errors, as such, the State has no concern,' and it may never restrain a religion, except when it produces grave 'civil mischiefs.' In asserting, however, that 'religion, or the care of the soul, is not within the province of the magistrate, and that consequently matters of doctrine and opinion are without his jurisdiction, this must always be understood with the exception to the three fundamental principles of natural religion—the being of a God; His providence over human affairs; and the natural essential difference of moral good and evil. These doctrines it is directly his office to cherish, protect, and propagate, and all oppugners of them it is as much his right and duty to restrain as any the most flagrant offenders against public peace.' And the reason of this exception is obvious. 'The magistrate concerns himself with the maintenance of these three fundamental articles, not as they promote our future happiness, but our present.' 'They are the very foundation and bond of civil policy.' Without them oaths and covenants, and all the ties of moral obligation, upon which society is founded, are dissolved. The laws against popery are likewise justifiable 'not as being directed against the religious errors of the Church, but against the political usurpations of the Court of Rome, which, when these laws were made,

[1] *First Letter concerning Toleration.*

exhorted men by papal edicts to parricide and rebellion.' 'The papist who owns a foreign ecclesiastical power superior to all temporal dominion' may at any time become a political danger, and therefore, though such men have at present a liberty of connivance under suspended penal Acts, those Acts are justly left on the statute book. Tests and disqualifications for the benefit of the Established Church are not penalties, but securities wisely intended to strengthen an institution which is of great utility to the nation.

The next very important work which appeared in England on this subject was the 'Moral and Political Philosophy' of Paley. It was published in 1785, and therefore followed the work of Warburton by almost the same interval as that which separated the works of Warburton and Locke.

It has been, I think, the fortune of this work to be of late years very unduly depreciated, partly because, in consequence of the singular charm and lucidity of its style, it has been so widely read, studied, and criticised that all its weak points have been fully disclosed, and partly also because the particular type of the utilitarian theory of ethics which it teaches has been generally abandoned. It is, however, both in form and substance, one of the masterpieces of the eighteenth century, and the author was much too shrewd a man not to know that the doctrines which he taught were not likely under George III. to lead a clergyman to the bench. In this work Paley rejects as a fiction or unproved hypothesis the theory of a social contract, on which Locke and Warburton based much of their reasoning; but, like them, he reduces the questions of an establishment and of toleration to simple utility. He shows the extreme importance of stationing in each district of the country an educated man, exclusively employed in teaching religion; of setting a class of men apart by

public authority for the study as well as for the teaching of an historical religion, and of making the clergy in some degree independent of their flocks. The Church, however, thus selected should always be that of the bulk of the people, and it should be made as comprehensive as possible, consistently with the maintenance of order in the celebration of divine worship. If subscriptions are not altogether abolished—if a mere promise to conform to the rites, liturgy, and offices of the Church is not found to be sufficient—the articles which are admitted should at least be made as simple and easy as possible. They 'should be adapted from time to time to the varying sentiments and circumstances of the Church in which they were received.' They should be articles of peace, only binding men not to preach against certain doctrines. Creeds and confessions may sometimes be necessary, but they are always an evil. 'They violate liberty. They ensnare the consciences of the clergy, by holding out temptations to prevarication;' by 'reason of the changes which are wont to take place in the judgment of mankind upon religious subjects, they come at length to contradict the actual opinions of the Church whose doctrines they profess to contain, and they often perpetuate the proscription of sects and tenets from which any danger has long ceased to be apprehended.'

Passing, then, to the question of toleration, the views of Paley show a great advance on those of his predecessors. Laws like the Test and Corporation Acts, excluding Dissenters in the interests of the Established Church from certain offices of trust and emolument in the State, rest, he admits, on a different ground from laws forbidding the profession or exercise of some form of religion; but they are inconsistent with perfect toleration, obstacles to the unbiassed pursuit of truth, and only to be justified on the ground of a clear pre-

ponderance of utility. No such utility, in the opinion of Paley, exists. If the Established Church contains an overwhelming majority of the English people, it will be strong enough to maintain itself. If the Dissenters ever become a majority, the Establishment itself ought to be altered, or qualified. If there exists among the different sects such a parity of numbers or power as to make the choice of one sect a matter 'of hazardous success and of doubtful election,' some form of concurrent endowment should be adopted.

The only example of such an endowment, with which Paley was acquainted, was in the newly formed States in North America, and the experiment was evidently one which excited great interest in his mind. Judging it from a distance, it seemed to him very difficult on such a scheme to arrange the parochial system, which he considered the chief advantage of an establishment, and he feared that it would lead to excessive Government expenditure, and a feverish and unhealthy competition of sects. The principle, however, he says, is a just one, and when sects are nearly balanced, it ought, if possible, to be adopted. Religious disqualifications in politics appear to him altogether unsound. It is no doubt true that enthusiasts who believe that Christianity has abolished all distinctions of property should not be made judges or magistrates, and that Quakers should not be trusted with military administration or command; but on the whole, among existing sects of Christians, 'with the single exception of refusing to bear arms,' there is no tenet which incapacitates men from serving the State. 'I perceive,' he writes, 'no reason why men of different religious persuasions may not sit upon the same bench, deliberate in the same council, or fight in the same ranks, as well as men of various or opposite opinions upon any controverted topic of natural philosophy, history, or ethics.'

The case of atheists, or other unbelievers, he does not deal with directly, but only by implication. He fully adopts the modern doctrine, that the law is concerned only with the actual conduct of men, and not with the course of conduct which may seem logically deducible from their principles. He makes no exception to his claim for toleration, and says, 'Under the idea of religious toleration, I include the toleration of all books of serious argumentation.' He adds, however—and surely with good reason—'I deem it no infringement of religious liberty to restrain the circulation of ridicule, invective, and mockery upon religious subjects.'

Nor does he find anything in Catholicism to exclude it from toleration. The only ground upon which the Legislature at the time of the Revolution can have been justified in proscribing this Church was the belief that its members were altogether, or for the most part, hostile to the present settlement of the Crown. If this be the case, and if the legislator can find no other test of men's inclination to the State equally certain and notorious, he is justified in enacting restrictive laws against popery. It should be remembered, however, that in this case it is not popery to which the laws object, but popery as the mark of Jacobitism; that the connection of popery and Jacobitism is their sole justification; that as this connection was accidental in its origin, so it will probably be temporary in its duration; 'and that these restrictions ought not to continue one day longer than some visible danger renders them necessary to the preservation of public tranquillity.'[1]

It is greatly to the credit of the liberal spirit of England that, in spite of the reaction produced by the French Revolution, a book containing these opinions should have passed through fifteen editions in the life

[1] *Moral Philosophy*, book vi. c. x.

of the author, and that it should have been made, almost immediately after its publication, a text-book at Cambridge.[1] Paley was, indeed, one of the ablest representatives of a school of divines which is the pre-eminent glory of the English Church in the eighteenth century—a school distinguished throughout Europe for its unflinching love of truth, its masculine and sober reasoning, its wide and generous tolerance. In some respects he stood greatly in advance of the leading politicians, and among others of Burke. Seventeen years before the outbreak of the French Revolution—at a time when the free-thinking spirit in Europe, and especially in England, seemed as far as possible from allying itself with any form of sedition or political turbulence—Burke, in a letter to Lady Huntingdon, expressing his hostility to the movement which had been set on foot for relieving the clergy of the Established Church from subscription to the Articles, added these very remarkable words: 'I am happy in coinciding with your ladyship in attachment to the Established Church. I wish to see her walls raised on the foundations laid in the volume of divine truth, that she may crush the conspiracy of atheism and those principles which will not leave to religion even a toleration.'[2]

In the following year, Burke strongly supported the measure for relieving the Protestant Nonconformist ministers from the obligation, which had been imposed

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[1] Meadley's *Life of Paley*, pp. 77, 83.

[2] *Life of Lady Huntingdon*, ii. 287. This letter was written in 1772. Priestley, a few years earlier, wrote: 'The most unrelenting persecution is to be apprehended not from bigots, but from infidels. A bigot, who is so from a principle of conscience, may possibly be moved by a regard to the consciences of others; but the man who thinks that conscience ought always to be sacrificed to political views has no principle on which an argument in favour of moderation can lay hold.'—*Essay on the First Principles of Government*, p. 290.

on them by the Toleration Act, of subscribing to the greater part of the Anglican Articles; but, while defending the Dissenters, he turned aside to make a most violent attack upon the atheists. He was replying to those who, arguing for connivance rather than legal toleration, contended that, if the Nonconformists were formally freed from the obligation of subscription, attacks on Theism and on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity might easily be made under the shelter of Nonconformity. 'If this danger is to be apprehended,' replied Burke, 'if you are really fearful that Christianity will indirectly suffer by this liberty, you have my free consent: go directly and by the straight way, and not by a circuit; . . . point your arms against these men who do the mischief you fear promoting; point your arms against men . . . who, by attacking even the possibility of all revelation, arraign all the dispensations of Providence to man. These are the wicked Dissenters you ought to fear; these are the people against whom you ought to aim the shaft of the law; these are the men to whom, arrayed in all the terrors of Government, I would say, You shall not degrade us into brutes. These men—these factious men, as the honourable gentleman properly called them—are the just objects of vengeance, not the conscientious Dissenter. . . . Against these I would have the laws rise in all their majesty of terrors to fulminate such vain and impious wretches, and to awe them into impotence by the only dread they can fear or believe. . . . The most horrid and cruel blow that can be offered to civil society is through atheism. Do not promote diversity: when you have it bear it; have as many sorts of religion as you find in your country: there is a reasonable worship in them all. The others—the infidels or outlaws of the Constitution, not of this country, but of the human race —they are never, never to be supported, never to be

tolerated. Under the systematic attacks of these people I see some of the props of good government already begin to fail—I see propagated principles which will not leave to religion even a toleration. . . . Those who hold revelation give double assurance to their country. Even the man who does not hold revelation, yet who wishes that it were proved to him, who observes a pious silence with regard to it, such a man, though not a Christian, is governed by religious principle. Let him be tolerated in this country. Let it be but a serious religion, natural or revealed—take what you can get—cherish, blow up the slightest spark. . . . By this proceeding you form an alliance, offensive and defensive, against those great ministers of darkness in the world who are endeavouring to shake all the works of God established in order and beauty. Perhaps I am carried too far, but it is in the road into which the honourable gentleman has led me. The honourable gentleman would have us fight this confederacy of the powers of darkness with the single arm of the Church of England. . . . Strong as we are, we are not equal to this. The cause of the Church of England is included in that of religion, not that of religion in the Church of England.'[1]

This passage is in more than one way remarkable. It shows how far Burke was from acknowledging that unlimited right of serious religious discussion which has become the received doctrine of the latter part of the nineteenth century. It shows that, as early as 1773, he looked forward to some such convulsion as that which was at its height in France twenty years later; and it is one of the many proofs that his attitude during the French Revolution was in reality only what might have been expected from the principles he had laid down in the earlier portion of his career.

[1] Burke's *Works*, x. 36-40.

In 1792 an attempt was made by Fox to repeal the Act of William III. under which the Unitarians were still liable to punishment, and to secure for them the legal position which other Protestant Dissenters had obtained by the Toleration Act. Their exclusion from the benefits of this Act seemed especially anomalous at a time when anti-Trinitarian opinions were notoriously rife, both among the Nonconformists and in the Established Church; and in 1774 Theophilus Lindsey, a very estimable clergyman who had lately seceded for conscience's sake from the Church, set up the first avowedly Unitarian place of worship in London.[1] He officiated there alone, and without molestation, for about twelve years, and afterwards in conjunction with Dr. Disney. Priestley's work on the 'Corruptions of Christianity,' which appeared in 1782, gave a considerable impulse to the movement. Some of the Unitarians adopted Arian opinions, and admitted the pre-existence of Christ, though not His equality with the Father; but the greater number, following in the steps of Socinus, believed with Priestley that Christ was a mere man, though they fully admitted His divine mission, His miracles, and His resurrection. It was very unfortunate for their claims to toleration that Priestley, who more than any other man had given them importance, was a warm admirer of the French Revolution and a vehement opponent of Church establishments.

It is remarkable, that in the debate which was raised on the Unitarian petition Lord North had himself brought down to the House to support Fox. On the subject of the Test and Corporation Acts, the old Tory chief said his opinions were unchanged. These laws were laws of security, intended to protect the Established

[1] See the *Memoir* appended to Belsham's 'Sermon on the Death of Lindsey.'

Church, and they were both necessary and just. But the laws making it penal to reject the doctrine of the Trinity were laws of persecution, and as such directly opposed to the spirit of Christianity. The Unitarians, he said, were not turbulent or seditious; and if they ever became so, it was for the ordinary law to punish them. Pitt, on the other hand, opposed the relief, chiefly on the ground of the ferment which the French Revolution had produced. No practical evil had resulted or was likely to result from these laws to any description of men. It was always wise to touch old laws relating to religion with extreme caution, and it would be especially foolish at this time to give encouragement to avowed enemies of the Established Church and of the Constitution. The great body of the English people, he was convinced, were firmly attached to the Constitution under which they lived; but an active section were animated by different principles, and if the measure of Fox were carried, these men would most certainly represent it as a first step to the gradual abolition of all the establishments and fundamental principles of the Constitution.

The principal speaker, however, against the motion was Burke; and his speech was evidently most carefully prepared. His own very copious notes for it are preserved, and they are well worthy of careful study, though in a work like the present I must confine myself to a brief summary and a few extracts. He began by his favourite doctrine that no rational politician will ever govern himself by abstractions and universals, by general rules or inflexible principles. 'Circumstances are infinite, and infinitely combined, variable, and transient;' and a statesman who refuses to be guided by them and to attend to the exigencies of the moment may ruin his country for ever. To a great part of the current speculation about the relations of Church and State he ex-

pressed himself decidedly opposed. The doctrine of Warburton, that Church and State are two distinct bodies, which have entered into an alliance for their mutual advantage, he wholly rejected. Like Hooker, he maintained that 'in a Christian commonwealth the Church and the State are one and the same thing, being different integral parts of the same whole,' and the laity are as much an essential part of the Church as the clergy. Nor had he any sympathy with the doctrine of the school of Hoadly, that the State has no right to interfere with religious opinions. 'Government representing the society, has a general, superintending control over all the actions, and over all the publicly propagated doctrines of men, without which it could never provide adequately for all the wants of society.' 'Religion is so far from being out of the province and duty of a Christian magistrate, that it is, and it ought to be, not only his care, but the principal thing in his care; because it is one of the great bonds of human society, and its object the supreme good, the ultimate end and object of man himself. . . . It is his right and duty to watch over it with an unceasing vigilance; to protect, to promote, to forward it, by every rational, just, and prudent means. It is principally his duty to prevent the abuses which grow out of every strong and efficient principle that actuates the human mind. . . . It is the interest, the duty, and the right of Government to attend much to opinions, because, as opinions soon combine with passions, even when they do not produce them, they have much influence on actions. Factions are formed upon opinions, which factions become in effect bodies corporate in the State.' 'A reasonable, prudent, provident, and moderate coercion may be a means of preventing acts of extreme ferocity and rigour; for by propagating excessive, and extravagant doctrines, such extravagant disorders take place as require the most perilous and fierce corrections to oppose them.'

What, then, is the nature and amount of coercion that may be justly employed? In order to answer this question at any time it is necessary for the legislator to know 'the peculiar and characteristic situation of a people, their opinions, prejudices, habits, and all the circumstances that diversify and colour life.' 'I am not,' said Burke, 'fond of defining with precision what the ultimate rights of the sovereign supreme power in providing for the safety of the commonwealth may be, or may not extend to.' 'If religion related only to the individual, and was a question between God and the conscience,' human authority would certainly have no right to intervene. If men 'limited their principles to their own congregations, and were satisfied themselves to abstain from what they thought unlawful, it would be cruel to molest them.' 'It would not be just even to trace consequences from principles, which, though evident to me, were denied by them.' But on the other hand, the legislator 'ought to look strictly to it when men begin to form new combinations, to be distinguished by new names, and especially when they mingle a political system with their religious opinions.' 'When religion is embodied into faction, and factions have objects to pursue, it must, more or less, become a question of power,' and governors have no right to permit religion, which ought to be one of the bonds of society, 'to be made the pretext of destroying its peace, order, liberty, and security.'

These principles, Burke argued, had been hitherto adopted in English religious legislation. Parliament had never laid down any general maxim that religion was not its concern, but directly the contrary. It had always examined particular grievances, and, with a due regard to times and circumstances, had remedied them by carefully limited laws. The Catholic had not been freed from the obligation of an oath; the Quaker had

not been empowered to say mass, but an amount of liberty had been given to each which was strictly measured by his requirements. Catholics, Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Independents, Quakers, were all in possession of defined liberties, and possession is a great title in human affairs. Nor were any serious dangers to be apprehended from them. 'Old religious factions are volcanos burnt out; on the lava and ashes and squalid scoriæ of old eruptions, the olive and the vine are now growing. Such was the first, such the second condition of Vesuvius. But when a new fire bursts out, a face of desolation comes on, not to be rectified in ages.' When, therefore, any new religious body rises up, claiming to be recognised by law, its character and designs should be carefully scrutinised.

It was on these principles that he opposed the petition of the Unitarians to be relieved from the laws directed against those who denied any Person of the Trinity, and to be suffered to constitute themselves into a distinct sect. The records of Parliament, he said, know nothing of any religious congregation or association, bearing the name which these petitioners had assumed. It was a new society which was to be called into legal existence; a society formed for the express purpose of proselytism; a society, whose leading members openly avowed their sympathy with French principles, and especially their implacable hostility to an established Church. The writings of Priestley and Dr. Kippis abundantly proved this, and Burke quoted from an apparently authorised report of a recent dinner of 'the Unitarian Society' which had been held at the King's Head Tavern, under the presidency of Priestley. It had been arranged on that occasion to celebrate July 14, the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille. The speeches were filled with eulogies of the proceedings in France; and among the toasts drunk were 'The National

Assembly of France; and may every tyrannical Government undergo a similar revolution!' 'Thomas Paine, and the 'Rights of Man;' 'May no society, civil or religious, claim rights for themselves, that they are not ready to concede to others.'[1] It is evident, Burke argued, that this sect is political, and not merely theological. 'The principle of your petitioners is no passive, conscientious dissent on account of an over-scrupulous habit of mind. It is fundamental, goes to the very root, and is at issue not upon this rite, or that ceremony, but upon this one question of an Establishment as unchristian, unlawful, contrary to Gospel, and to natural right, popish and idolatrous. These are the principles violently and fanatically held and pursued.'

Ought Parliament to suffer a society animated with these principles to acquire the augmented influence which would result from a legalised existence? The question, he says, resolves itself into a question of facts. Is there a real danger? Is it true that there is a design against the Constitution of this country, carried on by a restless faction with increasing vigour and activity? If this be so, Parliament is justified in being on its guard, and 'early and provident fear is the mother of safety.' The bulk of the people were still sound, but, in the opinion of Burke, about a fifth part were infected with the new doctrines. Considering what had happened, what was happening, in France, could it be said that under these circumstances there was not a grave danger? It was idle to assert that the Establishment must be in security, because the majority were in favour of it. Majorities are always composed chiefly of men of sluggish tempers, and with little promptness or decision of action, and nearly all revolutions are the work of resolute and active

[1] See *Annual Register*, 1792, pp. 368, 369.

minorities. For these reasons, and with a sole view to political expediency, he refused to give the Unitarians an organic existence. 'Let them disband as a faction, and let them act as individuals; and when I see them with no other views than to enjoy their own conscience in peace, I for one shall most cheerfully vote for their relief.'[1]

The arguments of Burke and the authority of Pitt prevailed. The motion of Fox was defeated by 142 to 63, and it was not till 1812 and 1813 that the Unitarians obtained in England a legal toleration for their opinions and their worship.[2] Like most of the more important speeches of Burke, his speech on this occasion contained principles of a much wider interest and application than the immediate subject of debate, and the extracts I have given will sufficiently show his theory of the relations of Church and State, and the extent, the nature, and the grounds of his intolerance. It will, however, perhaps, mitigate the surprise with which some portions of his speeches in 1773 and in 1792 may be read, to compare them with the views of some of the most advanced and most popular leaders of thought upon the Continent. Thus Montesquieu, who has written with admirable force on the iniquity of penal laws in matters of religion, while he maintains that it is the duty of a governor to tolerate all the religions which he finds established in his nation, to prevent them from injuring one another, and to secure every citizen from molestation on account of his creed, adds nevertheless that the introduction of a new religion into a country is an evil which he is perfectly justified, if possible, in preventing.[3] Voltaire wrote against persecution with greater persistence and success than any other writer of

[1] Burke's *Works*, x. 41–61.

[2] Stephen's *History of English Criminal Law*, ii. 469, 483.

[3] *Esprit des Lois*, livre xxv. ch. ix–xiii.

the eighteenth century, but he had no sympathy with the doctrine that the regulation of religion lies outside the sphere of Government. Actuated chiefly by his hatred of the papacy, but partly also by his strong leaning to authority, he maintained in one of his works that the prince ought in every country to be absolute master of the whole ecclesiastical system; that his relation to ecclesiastics is the same as that of the head of a family to the tutor who is employed to teach his children, and that he has a right to direct them authoritatively, in everything in any degree relating to public order. 'Religion which teaches a pure and useful morality the philosophical prince will encourage, but he will prevent his subjects from disputing on dogmas, as such disputes have never produced anything but evil.'[1]

'The functions of the ministers of religion,' he elsewhere says, 'their persons, their possessions, their pretensions, their manner of teaching morals, preaching dogma, and performing ceremonies, their spiritual punishments, everything in a word which affects the civil order, should be submitted to the authority of the prince and to the inspection of the magistrate.' The sovereign has, indeed, no right to employ force to bring men to any religion, nor is he a competent judge of the truth of dogma, but he has a full right to take cognisance of dogma if there is anything contrary to the public good either in its essence or in the manner in which it is taught. Dissenters from the established religion should always be obliged to apply to him for an authorisation to hold their religious assemblies. When they are so authorised, no one should be suffered to molest them, but the sovereign has a right at all times to know what passes in their assemblies, to reform abuses that may arise and to dissolve their congregations if they lead to disorder, and

[1] *La Voix du Sage et du Peuple* (1750).

the whole of their worship, their formularies, and their public instruction should be submitted to constant Government inspection.[1]

Views at least equally removed from the modern ideal of religious liberty were held by other conspicuous leaders of French thought. Thus Bernardin de St. Pierre, while strongly asserting in general terms the right of religious tolerance, proceeds to argue that no legislator should tolerate a superstitious religion which makes men subject to men rather than to God; or an intolerant religion, which teaches them to avoid, hate, or oppress one another.[2]

Mably, in some respects, pushed the spirit of speculative innovation further than any of the other great precursors of the Revolution, and some of the most important and most valuable chapters in his works are devoted to an examination of the relations of religion to politics and morals. He had himself shown the sincerity of his tolerance by sacrificing a political career and the patronage of the Cardinal de Tencin rather than acquiesce by his silence in the determination of that prelate to dissolve a Protestant marriage, and he strenuously maintained that all religions which have acquired a footing in the nation should be tolerated, and that legislation on religious matters should be inspired solely by the interests of society. He at the same time contended that all atheists, materialists, and epicureans, who persisted in maintaining their views, should be imprisoned for life; that all deists who attacked the religion of the country should be punished by shorter periods of imprisonment, and that it is the duty of the legislator to prevent the introduction into the State of any new religions or any alterations of existing ones.[3]

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[1] *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, art 'Droit Canonique.'

[2] *Vœux d'un Solitaire—Vœux pour la Nation.*

[3] *Traité de la Législation*, livre iv. ch. ii., iii., iv.

Rousseau held substantially the same opinions. He professed and believed himself to be a warm advocate of toleration, but he states that every Government has a right to impose certain articles of belief as essential qualifications of a good citizen and a faithful subject. The articles of this civil religion are the existence of a powerful, intelligent, and benevolent Divinity; a providential government; a future life; the happiness of the good; the punishment of the bad; the obligation of the social contract and of the laws. Whoever refuses to declare his belief in these doctrines should be banished from the realm. Whoever, having publicly accepted them, acts as if he did not believe them, should be punished with death. One doctrine only should be proscribed by law, but it is a doctrine that is professedly held by a vast section of the Christian world: 'Whoever dares to say, Outside the Church there is no salvation, should be banished from the State,' unless the State is a theocracy governed by a pontiff. It is impossible that any man who holds such a belief can live in harmony with those who are not his co-religionists.[1]

Although the efforts of the English Unitarians and other Protestant Nonconformists were at this time unsuccessful, an important step was taken in the direction of religious liberty by the Catholic Relief Bill of 1791, which removed some of the extraordinary hardships and anomalies of the position of Catholics in England. The Act of 1778 had repealed, for the benefit of those who took an oath prescribed by the statute, the legislation of

[1] *Contrat Social*, livre iv. ch. viii. In his letter to M. de Beaumont, Rousseau says: 'Je crois qu'un homme de bien, dans quelque religion qu'il vive de bonne foi, peut être sauvé. Mais je ne crois pas pour cela qu'on puisse légitimement introduire en un pays des religions étrangères sans la permission du souverain; car si ce n'est pas directement désobéir à Dieu, c'est désobéir aux lois, et qui désobéit aux lois, désobéit à Dieu.'

William III., which subjected to perpetual imprisonment every priest found guilty of celebrating mass, and every papist who kept a school; which offered a large reward for the apprehension and conviction of popish priests, and which disabled papists from either purchasing or inheriting land. It did not, however, as might have been supposed, give the Catholics a legal toleration, for it left untouched a number of laws of Elizabeth and the early Stuarts, which made any priest found in England guilty of high treason, and punished with fine or imprisonment any person who heard mass, absented himself without lawful reason from the Anglican service, kept or attended a Catholic school, or sent his children to be educated as Catholics on the Continent. It is true that these laws had been virtually, though not legally, abolished by the laws of William, under which all the eighteenth-century prosecutions before 1778 appear to have taken place, but while they remained on the Statute-book the position of the Catholics could hardly be otherwise than precarious, and there were many existing grievances of a most practical kind. Catholics were still obliged to pay a double land tax, and to enroll by an expensive and inquisitorial process the deeds of their estates, and they were subject to an almost universal disqualification. They were excluded from the army and navy; from the whole legal profession;[1] from all civil and military posts; from the right of sitting in either House of Parliament; from the right

[1] Lord Campbell, however, says: 'At this time conveyancing was chiefly in the hands of Roman Catholics. Being long prevented by their religion from being called to the bar, they practised successfully in chambers; and being employed at first by their co-religionists, their industry and learning forced them into general business. Charles Butler, whom I well knew, may be considered the last of this race.'—Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, ix. 143.

of voting for representative peers or for members of the House of Commons.

As early as February 1788, a committee of English Catholics had presented a memorial to Pitt, enumerating their grievances and asking his assistance. Pitt answered them favourably, but urged great pressure of business as a reason for delay, and recommended them, as a preliminary step, to collect authentic evidence of the opinions of the Catholic clergy and universities with respect to the existence and extent of the Pope's dispensing power. Opinions were accordingly obtained from the Universities of the Sorbonne, Douay, Louvain, Alcala, and Salamanca, asserting that neither the Pope, cardinals, nor any individual or body of men in the Church of Rome had any civil authority, jurisdiction, or pre-eminence whatsoever within the realm of England, or any power of releasing on any pretext the King's subjects from their oath of allegiance, and denying that there was anything in the belief of Catholics which could justify them in not keeping faith with heretics. At the suggestion of Lord Stanhope, the great body of the English Catholics, including the four Vicars-Apostolic who then governed the Catholic Church in England and almost all the Catholic clergy, signed a protestation which was laid before Parliament with their petition for relief. It was intended to disabuse the Protestant mind of the belief that there was something in Catholicism necessarily hostile to the civil power in a Protestant country. The protesting Catholics denounced in the strongest terms the doctrines that either the Pope, or the Pope and General Council combined, had any power of deposing kings; of causing excommunicated kings to be murdered; of absolving subjects from the oath of allegiance; of commanding subjects, under pain of damnation, to take up arms against their sovereign; of making any act justifiable which is in itself immoral or

dishonest; of releasing Catholics from the obligation of any oath or compact whatsoever. With equal energy they repudiated, as contrary alike to religion, morality, and common honesty, the doctrine that faith is not to be kept with heretics or infidels, and they very boldly asserted that, except when there is 'a sincere sorrow for past sin, a firm resolution to avoid future guilt, and every possible atonement to God and the injured neighbour,' neither Pope nor priest had, according to their belief, any power whatever to forgive sins.[1] 'We acknowledge,' they said, 'no infallibility in the Pope.' The Catholic Church has no power over Protestants except that of excluding them from its sacraments and other religious privileges; 'no jurisdiction or authority whatsoever within this realm, that can directly or indirectly affect or interfere with the independence, sovereignty, laws, constitution or government thereof, or the rights, liberties, persons, or properties of the people.'

This protestation was afterwards thrown into the form of an oath, and embodied in the Relief Bill as it was first introduced into Parliament; but a dispute, into the details of which it would be too long to enter here,[2]

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[1] Everyone who is acquainted with the administration of criminal law in Ireland can test this assertion. It is well known that the immense majority of Catholic murderers who are convicted in that country go to the gallows fortified by the religious rites of their Church, attended by a priest, and manifesting the most perfect submission to his teaching. Yet nothing can be more rare than for any Catholic murderer to make the one possible atonement to society and his neighbour by confessing his guilt and the justice of his sentence. Religious teachers of every other Christian creed enjoin such a confession as a matter of the plainest moral duty, and in the case of non-Catholic criminals it is the usual and the natural result of sincere penitence. Catholic priests alone do not enjoin, or require, or encourage it, and it would be difficult to exaggerate the pernicious influence they have had in this respect in weakening the respect for justice, and in perverting and lowering the moral feelings of the Irish people.

[2] The whole history—which is a somewhat curious one—of the

arose between the bishops and the great body of the Catholics, chiefly about the exact terms in which the Pope's jurisdiction should be disclaimed. The Bill was introduced by Mr. Mitford, and it had the full assent of the Government. The only part of the existing disqualifications which it touched was that relating to the legal profession, which, from the rank of barrister downwards, was now thrown open to Catholics; but the Bill abolished for the benefit of the protesting Catholics the statutes against Popish recusants. It granted a legal toleration to the Catholic worship and schools, and it freed Catholics from the necessity of enrolling their deeds and wills, and from some obsolete but insulting liabilities to which they were still exposed. They could no longer be summoned by magistrates to take the oath of supremacy and declaration against transubstantiation. Peers who had not taken this oath and declaration were no longer forbidden to enter the King's presence, and it was no longer to be in the power of the Government to order the removal of papists from London and Westminster. It was provided, however, that not only Catholic chapels and schools, but also the names of all schoolmasters and officiating priests, must be registered; that no Catholic assembly might be held with locked doors; that no Catholic chapel should have a steeple or a bell; that no priest should wear the habits or perform the rites of his religion in the open air, or anywhere except in authorised buildings or in private houses where not more than five persons, in addition to the household, were present; that no child of a Protestant parent should

negotiations and differences of the Catholics, previous to the Act of 1791, is given in great detail by Charles Butler, who bore a large part in them. See his *Memoirs of the English Catholics*, ii. 99–138; the *Supplemental Memoirs* of his opponent, Bishop Milner; and Father Amherst's, *Hist. of Catholic Emancipation*, i. 149–178.

be admitted into a Catholic school; that no monastic order should be established in England; that no Catholic school or college should be endowed. Subject to these numerous restrictions and limitations, the position of Catholics who took the prescribed oath was now a secure one.[1]

The double land tax, being imposed by the annual Land-tax Act, could not be included in the Relief Bill; but from this time the clause imposing it was regularly omitted.

The Bill passed the Commons without a division, and in the House of Lords the only alteration made was one which was desired by the Vicars-Apostolic. The oath, formed with very little change out of the Protestation, had been condemned by the bishops, and another and somewhat simpler form of oath was in consequence substituted, which was taken almost without alteration from the oath in the Irish Relief Act of 1774. With this change the Bill passed unanimously through both Houses.

The Catholics were indeed singularly fortunate in the time at which they urged their claims. The Relief Bill was warmly supported as a measure of religious liberty by the whole body of the Protestant Nonconformists,[2] and by all those classes who welcomed the French Revolution. Under the Stuarts, and for a long period after the Revolution of 1688, the Whig party had been intensely anti-Catholic, and clear traces of this spirit may be seen even in the speeches of Chatham; but under the leadership of Fox it completely passed away. From this time religious liberty, without exception or restriction, became the watchword of the party; and during many

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[1] 31 Geo. III. c. 32.

[2] See the speech of W. Smith, who chiefly represented the Dissenting interest in Parliament. *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 1376. See, too, Butler's *Memoirs of the English Catholics*, ii. 111

years of unpopularity and adversity they defended the Catholic cause with a consistency and self-sacrifice which have been rarely equalled in the history of parties, and for which they have often been repaid by the basest ingratitude. As might have been expected, the Bill was not all that Fox could have desired. He entirely objected to religious tests; he wished an unlimited toleration, irrespective of any oath, except the oath of allegiance; but he wisely abstained from dividing the House. 'His sentiment,' he said, 'was that the State had no right to inquire into the opinions of people, either political or religious; they had a right only to take cognisance of their actions.' 'The public might prescribe what qualifications and restrictions they pleased for any person, before the King could employ them in their service, but . . . toleration in religion is one of the great rights of man, and a man ought never to be deprived of what was his natural right.' 'He rejoiced that in a few years they must come to a general toleration, for the times were too much enlightened to suffer men's minds to remain shackled. There was one plain road to pursue; keep in, if they pleased, all their statutes for the Establishment . . . but let the statute book be examined, and strike out all the others which relate merely to opinions.'[1]

While these were the views of the chief of the Opposition, the other side of the House on other grounds were equally favourable to the Catholics. The no-Popery panic had been superseded by a new danger. The French Revolution, which had startled and alarmed all the supporters of monarchical and ecclesiastical establishments, had been directed at first mainly against a branch of the Catholic Church, and that Church was now regarded as the most powerful bulwark of the Conservative party

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 1267, 1365, 1368.

throughout Europe. The Anglican bishops fully supported the Relief Bill, and it was Bishop Horsley who induced the House of Lords to change the form of oath in order to meet the objections of the Vicars-Apostolic.[1] Burke strongly supported the measure. Without the smallest disposition to believe Roman Catholic theology, he had always a strong sympathy with the Catholic Church, which is easily explained by the circumstances of his family and his nationality, and by his natural leaning towards antiquity and authority. The French Revolution greatly strengthened it, and, as we shall hereafter see, the advocacy of the claims of the Irish Catholics was one of the last works of his great and admirable career. It was his firm conviction that the political dangers that had sprung from the papacy in the sixteenth, and in some measure in the seventeenth, century, were now completely extinct, and that Catholicism must for the future be regarded as one of the chief conservative elements in Europe. 'It is a great truth,' he wrote to an Irish member of Parliament, 'that if the Catholic religion is destroyed by the infidels, it is a most contemptible and absurd idea that this, or any Protestant Church, can survive the event;' and speaking of the Irish, he added 'Let them grow lax, sceptical, and careless, and indifferent with regard to religion, and, so sure as we have an existence, it is not a zealous Anglican or Scottish Church principle, but direct Jacobinism which will enter into that breach.'[2]

Pitt had himself no anti-Catholic feeling, and the Relief Bill of 1791 would probably have been much more extensive but for one unfavourable influence. It could hardly be argued with any approach to plausibility that there was serious political danger to be apprehended from the English Catholics—a small, harmless,

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 678. [2] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 296, 297.

insignificant, and most pacific class, who in political matters were generally guided by the representatives of a few old and highly respected aristocratic families. In Ireland, however, where property, political power, and the established Church were in the hands of a Protestant minority, the situation was very different, and the Irish Government at this time was exceedingly anti-Catholic. They continually represented to Pitt that an extended Relief Act in England would immensely strengthen the demand for a similar measure in Ireland, and that dangers of a most serious kind might thus be created. This consideration appears to have chiefly decided him to restrict the English measure to the provisions that have been described.

The English Act produced no popular ferment, and in less than two years a measure was carried for the relief of the Catholics in Scotland. In that country, as in England, a practical toleration appears to have been at last attained,[1] though no Relief Bill had as yet been passed, for Scotland was not included in the English Acts of 1778 or 1791. At the beginning of the French Revolution, the Scotch Catholics were reduced to great distress by the confiscation of the Scotch establishments in France, from which the payment of their priests was largely derived. It is a curious illustration of the changed spirit of the time that a Catholic bishop brought this fact before the English Government, and that the Government for two or three years gave secretly small salaries to all the Catholic priests in Scotland, besides

[1] A writer who travelled through the Highlands in 1786, says: "'While the Protestant clergy have neither dwelling houses nor places to preach in, those of the Catholic persuasion in the Highlands have both, and which (*sic*) are kept in excellent repair. On one estate only there are seven priests and a bishop, who, besides the contributions from their hearers, have a small allowance from the Church of Rome.'—*A Tour in the Highlands in* 1786, by John Knox, p. clxiii.

contributing to two Catholic seminaries.[1] The toleration, however, which the Scotch Catholics enjoyed was still of a very precarious kind. Among the laws that were unrepealed was one enabling the nearest Protestant relation to tender an oath which was inconsistent with Catholicism to any Catholic landowner, and if he refused to take it, to appropriate the estate. The law was so odious, that it was very rarely put in force, and the law courts appear to have done everything in their power, by technical difficulties, to make it inoperative; but a case of this kind was actually before the courts when the Relief Bill of 1793 was carried, which placed the Scotch Catholics in a position substantially similar to that of the Catholics of England.[2]

One other measure remains to be noticed in this review of religious legislation. The entire extinction of Jacobitism rendered the severe laws that had long been in force against the Protestant Episcopalian Church in Scotland wholly unnecessary. The death of Charles Edward in 1788 took away the last pretext of Jacobitism, and the Scotch bishops, assembled in synod at Aberdeen, agreed to submit, and to pray for the King by name. A measure was accordingly framed in 1795, repealing the stringent and persecuting Acts of the first two Georges, and giving the Scotch Episcopalians a perfect toleration, provided their ministers took the usual Scotch oaths and prayed for the King. No clergyman, however, in Scotch orders, could hold a benefice, or even fill a curacy, in England.[3]

We may now pass to other classes of questions

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[1] Amherst's *Hist. of Catholic Emancipation*, i. 279, 280.

[2] 33 Geo. III. c. 44; Butler's *Memoirs of the English Catholics*, ii. 459–466.

[3] 32 Geo. III. c. 63. For an enumeration of the laws against the Scotch Episcopalians, see vol. ii. pp. 313–315. See, too, Perry's *Hist. of the Church of England*, iii. 522, 523.

which were agitated in Parliament between the King's recovery and the beginning of the great French war. In the constitutional history of England this period is comparatively barren; but two important questions were settled by the concurrence of the leaders on both sides. Among the extreme remedies provided by the Constitution for extreme abuses, one of the most serious is parliamentary impeachment; and it is obviously essential to its efficacy that Parliament should have the power of carrying it through to its end. The right claimed by the Crown of arresting impeachment by a pardon was condemned by a vote of the House of Commons immediately after the Revolution, and the Act of Settlement finally enacted 'that no pardon under the Great Seal of England be pleadable to an impeachment by the Commons in Parliament.' It was still, however, undecided whether the Crown might not put an end to impeachments by proroguing or by dissolving the House of Commons. The first of these questions was raised in 1717, on the occasion of the impeachment of the Earl of Oxford, and it was then formally resolved that a prorogation of Parliament does not determine an impeachment. The second question was decided in connection with the impeachment of Warren Hastings. There was a dissolution in the summer of 1790, and when the new Parliament met it was contended that the proceedings of the former House of Commons against Hastings were null and void, that the impeachment was at an end, and that it must be either abandoned or begun again from the beginning. It is remarkable that Pitt, on this occasion, held a conference with Fox and Burke, the only occasion, it is said, since the Coalition Ministry, on which the two great rivals were brought together in private life.[1]

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[1] Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 80.

Erskine maintained, in a long and elaborate speech, that the impeachment was at an end, and the great preponderance of lawyers, including the Chancellor, the Chief Justice of the King's Bench, the Master of the Rolls, the Attorney-General, and the Solicitor-General, were on the same side.[1] They argued partly from precedents, which, however, they were obliged to admit to be conflicting, and partly from analogies drawn from the proceedings of the Common Law Courts. Pitt, Fox, and Burke, however, concurred in the opposite view. The speech of Pitt on this occasion is an extraordinary instance of the superiority with which, on an essentially legal question, he could contend with the foremost lawyers of his time; and in accordance with his opinion, it was resolved by a great majority that a dissolution does not terminate an impeachment, and that a new House of Commons has a right to take up the proceedings at the point at which they had been left by its predecessor.

The second question, which was now finally settled, was the long dispute about the rights of juries in cases of libel. We have seen in a former part of this work how Hardwicke, Mansfield, and many less distinguished judges had uniformly contended that in cases of libel the province of the jury was merely to determine the fact of the publication, and the meaning of the allusions; and that when these points were established, it was for the judge alone to pronounce whether the incriminated document was libellous. A Bill, drawn up by Burke and introduced by Dowdeswell, had been brought before Parliament in the beginning of 1771, with the object of giving juries the right of deciding on the whole question; but it was defeated, and Fox was one of the majority that threw it out. After the lapse of twenty years,

[1] Tomline's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 196, 197.

however, his opinion was changed, and he now introduced a declaratory Bill, to the same effect as the measure which he had opposed in 1771, and he carried it with the full assent of Pitt. The Chancellor, Lord Thurlow, vehemently opposed it, and signed a protest describing its doctrine as 'contrary to the determination of the judges and the unvarying practice of ages.' It is curious to observe, that this great triumph of the liberty of the press only preceded by a very short time a series of press prosecutions, that were certainly the harshest since the accession of the House of Hanover.

The question of parliamentary reform continued almost dormant, and the outbreak of the French Revolution had strongly indisposed the nation to reopen it. In 1790, however, Flood brought forward a scheme for adding to the House a hundred members elected by the resident householders of the counties, and he suggested, though he did not formally propose, that if this addition to the numbers of the House were deemed too large, the balance might be redressed by taking half the members from a hundred minute boroughs which returned two members each. The motion, though it had the usual fate of great constitutional changes proposed by private members, at least led to an interesting debate. Quoting the saying of Machiavelli that 'no free government can last that is not often brought back to its first principles,' Flood stated that the English Constitution had so far receded from the ideal of popular representation, that from six to eight thousand electors actually returned a majority of the members of the House of Commons. He cited the opinion of Blackstone, that the Crown, since the Revolution, had gained more in influence than it had lost in prerogative; the prediction of Hume that arbitrary government was likely to be the euthanasia of the British Constitution; the argument of Bishop Sherlock, who had defended

the Test and Corporation Acts on the ground that the petty boroughs were so numerous that, if the Dissenters ever obtained an ascendency in them, they might, though only a twentieth part of the English people, command a majority in the House of Commons. He contended that the middle class, which was so feebly represented in English politics, and which it was his special object to strengthen, was more likely than any other class to exercise political power soberly, honestly, and independently, and that the great increase of taxation was a strong reason for enlarging the area of representation. About eight millions of Englishmen, he said, were now burdened with a debt of 240 millions, and paid annually in taxation fifteen and a half millions, or about fifty shillings a head. The evil that might result from the present system was shown by the conflict between the House of Commons and the public opinion of the nation during the Middlesex election and by the calamitous American War which, Flood maintained, would have been impossible if the House had adequately represented the popular will. He denied that the disturbances in France furnished any just argument against reform. Very moderate reforms under the Tudors might have prevented the civil war under Charles I. Very moderate reforms under Charles II. might have made the Revolution unnecessary; and 'those who oppose reform may be enemies to revolution in their hearts, but they are friends to it by their folly.'

The keynote of the opposition was struck by Windham, when he asked whether any wise man would 'select the hurricane season to repair his house.' Pitt said he must oppose the motion as inopportune, though he was still a friend of reform; and Fox, while supporting Flood, frankly confessed that he did not believe that the majority, either within or without the House, were at this time in favour of reform. He still held his old

opinion that the unpopular side of the Middlesex election question was the true one, and he acknowledged his belief that public opinion in England was in favour of the commencement of the American war, though a popular Parliament might have shortened its duration. Even the latter proposition was denied by Burke. 'The American war,' he said, 'was originally the war of the people, and was put a stop to, not by them, but by the virtue of a British House of Commons, who, without any petitions from the people, without their interference, and almost without their consent, had the magnanimity to take upon themselves to put an end to it.'[1]

Flood's motion was superseded by an adjournment, and from this time, for nearly forty years, the stream flowed steadily against the reformers. Grey, indeed, as the representative of the 'Society of the Friends of the People,' brought the subject before Parliament in 1792, 1793, and 1797, but only to encounter complete and ignominious defeat, and there is little doubt that Pitt, in opposing every attempt at this time to touch the framework of the Constitution, represented the genuine sentiment of the greater part of the nation.

An important constitutional measure, however, was carried in 1791, in the Quebec Government Act, which established representative government in Canada. Since 1774, the administration of affairs in this colony had been in the hands of a council nominated by the Crown,[2] but the time, it was thought, had now come to create free institutions and to place the Government on a permanent basis. The presence of a great French majority in the colony, and the fact that the French colonists were attached to French laws, while the English preferred those of their own country, complicated the problem, and it was met by the division of Canada

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 452 479.

[2] 14 Geo. III. c. 83.

into two distinct provinces—upper and lower, corresponding roughly, but substantially, with the nationalities.

The new Constitution was framed partly on the model of the old Crown colonies in America, and partly on that of the British Constitution. There was to be a governor and a lieutenant governor, and in each province a council and an assembly. The assemblies were to be elected chiefly by freeholders, or 10*l*. leaseholders, and to be renewed by septennial elections. The members of the councils were nominated by the governor for life, and a power was at the same time reserved to the Crown of annexing to certain honours an hereditary right of sitting in the council. The Catholic majority had already obtained a full title to their old Church lands, but it was provided in the Bill that, instead of tithes, a seventh portion of all the newly allotted lands should be assigned to the Protestant clergy, as an endowment. In cases of judicial appeal, the judgment of the Privy Council was no longer to be final. There was to be a still further appeal to the House of Lords. The possibility of disputes like those which had produced the severance of the other American colonies from England was carefully guarded against. It was distinctly provided that the British Parliament could impose no taxes on Canada, except those that were necessary for the regulation of trade and commerce, and that even those must be levied and disposed of exclusively by the Canadian Legislature.

A great part of the debate on the Quebec Bill was exceedingly discursive and disorderly. The French Revolution now coloured every discussion, and a passing sarcasm of Fox turned it for a time almost wholly in that direction. Fox accused the Government of endeavouring to call into existence in the New World the blue and red ribbons which had so lost their lustre

in the Old World, the titles of honour and the spirit of chivalry, whose extinction in the neighbouring country had been so greatly deplored. Burke retorted by accusing Fox of endeavouring to introduce French principles into Canadian government, and he entered into an elaborate disquisition on the enormities of the French Revolution. A stranger who listened to the debate might easily, during many hours, have imagined that it was the affairs, not of Canada, but of France that were under discussion. Member after member vainly tried to turn it back to the Quebec Bill. The Speaker seems to have remained perfectly passive, and Pitt, while maintaining that a diccussion of the French Constitution was very inexpedient, denied that it was disorderly, as the question before the House was the creation of a new form of government and the principles on which it should be based. It was in the course of this debate that the famous breach between Fox and Burke took place, and the interest attaching to this episode has diverted the attention of most historians from the merits of the Bill.

The Quebec Government Bill, however, was quite important enough to be considered on its own merits, and it raised questions of the most far-reaching interest. Nearly every part of the Government scheme was objected to by Fox. He objected to the division of the provinces; to the septennial elections, to the small number of members in the Legislature, to the regulation of appeals, to the amount of land which was allotted to the clergy; but the part against which his most serious arguments were urged was the composition of the councils, or upper chambers. He argued, with great force, that it was an act of folly to attempt to create hereditary aristocracy in a new country, and he recommended the example of the United States, in which the councils were elective. At the same time he strenuously dis-

claimed the levelling principles that were ascribed to him. The modern democratic creed that no special weight should be given in the elective system either to property or to intelligence; that property can be permanently secure where the poor have an unchecked and unlimited power of taxing the rich; that a great, highly complex, and heterogeneous empire can be maintained, and safely and wisely administered, where vast majorities of the most ignorant classes of the community are the ultimate source of all political power and control, finds no countenance in the speeches of Fox. His language on this subject is clear and decisive, and it marks out the true principles of the Whig party.

'It was always,' he said, 'his wish rather to give the Crown less power and the people more, where it could be done with safety;' and 'he was decidedly of opinion that the Constitution of this country was more liable to be ruined by an increase of the power of the Crown than by an increase of the power of the people.' But, on the other hand, he laid it down 'as a principle never to be departed from, that every part of the British dominion ought to possess a government, in the constitution of which, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy were mutually blended and united; nor could any government be a fit one for British subjects to live under which did not contain its due weight of aristocracy, as this is the proper poise of the Constitution—the balance that equalised and meliorated the powers of the two other extreme branches, and gave stability and firmness to the whole.' 'Aristocracy,' he continued, 'in its true sense, is an indispensably necessary part of a mixed government under a free Constitution, and it ought to be made as essential a part of the Canadian Constitution as either the monarchical or the popular branch. But aristocracy, in its true meaning, does not rest solely, or even mainly, upon birth. In England the House of

Lords formed the aristocracy, and it consisted partly of ancient families, and partly of peers newly created on account of their extended landed property. That prejudice for ancient families, and that sort of pride which belonged to a nobility, were right to be encouraged in a country like this; otherwise one great incentive to virtue would be abolished, and the national dignity as well as its domestic interests would be diminished and weakened.' 'The British House of Lords stands on the hereditary, known, and acknowledged respect of the country for particular institutions.' It would be folly to abolish it, and exceedingly unwise to mingle the hereditary peers with life peers, as such a measure would enable the Crown 'to overwhelm the hereditary peerage, and thus destroy the constitutional control of the aristocracy, in case they attempted to resist it.' 'It was impossible, however, to put an infant Constitution on the same footing' as the House of Lords. Hereditary dignities which in an old country would command universal respect, in the colonies would be ridiculous; and the French 'seigneurs,' who were the nearest approach to a nobility, 'were utterly unfit, and were not respected enough, to be made hereditary nobles.'

Under these circumstances, the true method of creating in the Canadian Constitution a strong and permanent aristocratic balance was to seek it, not in birth, but in the other great element of aristocracy. 'Property,' he said, 'was, and had ever been held to be, the true foundation of aristocracy.' In order 'to put the freedom and stability of the Constitution of Canada on the strongest basis, he proposed that the council should be elective. But how elective? Not as the members of the House of Assembly were intended to be, but upon another footing. He proposed that the members of the council should not be eligible unless they possessed qualifications infinitely higher than those who

were eligible to be chosen members of the House of Assembly. And in like manner the electors of the members of council must possess qualifications also proportionately higher than those of the electors of representatives in the House of Assembly. By this means they would have a real aristocracy, chosen by persons of property from among persons of the highest property, and who would thence necessarily possess that weight, influence, and independence from which alone could be derived a power of guarding against any innovation that might be made, either by the people on the one part, or the Crown on the other.' 'A true aristocracy,' he concluded with great emphasis, 'gave a country that sort of energy, that sort of spirit, and that sort of enterprise which always made a country great and happy.'[1]

This very remarkable speech was intended by Fox as an answer to those who accused him of being a mere demagogue, or republican, and if it had represented the general tenor of his speeches it would be difficult to understand how such an impression could have prevailed. The truth seems to be, that his vehemence and indiscretion often betrayed him into expressions in advance of his real and deliberate opinions, and he had strangely little of that tact in observing times and seasons which is essential to a successful statesman. As Burke happily said, a very moderate speech on the merits of Protestantism and the demerits of popery might be dangerous and incendiary if it had been delivered when the Gordon riots were at their height. Fox was perpetually expressing his gratification at the French Revolution at a time when English public opinion was not only horrified by its atrocities, but also panic-stricken by the dangers to Church and State which might ensue from its example; and he was perpetually

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 419-424, 425.

dilating on the necessity of reform, and on the danger of the excessive power of the Crown, when, in the opinion of the great mass of the English people, all the pressing dangers were from the opposite quarter. His private letters show that he was far from insensible to the horrors that were being perpetrated in France, but, through his indignation at what he deemed the exaggerations of his opponents, he gave no adequate expression to his feeling. The founding of the 'Friends of the People,' and Grey's unfortunate campaign in favour of reform, were contrary to the judgment of Fox, though he confessed that he had not the resolution to discourage them. In his own real opinions on constitutional questions there was little that was exaggerated, and they often showed a singularly sound political judgment. Few persons will now dispute the justice of his opinion that it was inexpedient to introduce hereditary aristocracy into a country which had none of the materials, traditions, or sentiments out of which true aristocracies are formed; and although the power of creating hereditary honours in Canada was reserved to the Crown, it was never exercised. The division of French and English Canada may have been the best expedient under the circumstances, but it ultimately led to grave disaffection and dissension; and the union of 1840, which put an end to it, proved perhaps the most successful measure in Canadian history. In deference to the wish of Fox, Pitt consented to increase the number of members in the Assembly of Lower Canada, and to abolish the appeal from Canadian law courts to the Privy Council, but with these exceptions the original scheme of the Quebec Government Bill was carried without alteration,[1] and it governed Canada till the rebellion of 1837 and 1838 led to the revised Constitution of 1840.

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[1] 31 Geo. III. c. 31.

There is one characteristic of the Quebec Government Act which does not appear to have been adverted to in debate, but which is peculiarly worthy of the attention of historians. It is the complete abandonment of all attempt to induce or compel Canada to contribute to the military or naval forces of the Empire. It cannot be too clearly understood that the essential object of George Grenville in his colonial policy was not to establish the right of the English to tax America, but to establish the principle that America should contribute something to her own military defence. The example of Ireland, where 15,000 men were maintained by the local Parliament, 12,000 of whom could not be moved from Ireland without the consent of the Irish Parliament, while the remainder were at the full disposal of the English Executive, was continually before his eyes; and if he endeavoured to establish some such system in America, by means of the Imperial Parliament, it was merely because there was no single legislature for the American colonies. If, however, by any kind of negotiation or arrangement he could have induced the colonies to undertake a part of their own military defence, and of the defence of the neighbouring islands, he would have been fully satisfied.

It is difficult to exaggerate the degree in which the British Empire would have been strengthened if each of its more important parts could have been persuaded to maintain a permanent force sufficient to secure it from the danger of a sudden attack, and perhaps, in times of extreme need and difficulty, to give some small help to the parent State. Manifold and inestimable as are the advantages which England derives from her scattered possessions in time of peace, no serious statesman can fail to perceive how many vulnerable points those possessions present in time of war; how grave may be the dangers resulting from the dispersion of the national

forces which is necessary for their defence; how greatly they increase the temptations, pretexts, and probabilities of war; how easily an attack upon them, without any attempt at annexation or occupation, might lead to the disruption of the Empire. The attachment of the most loyal colonists to the mother country could hardly fail to be dangerously strained if they found their commerce destroyed, their coasts invaded and their towns bombarded on account of an Imperial policy in which they had no voice or interest; while the cost, difficulties, and dangers of colonial defence form the most plausible argument of those who have sought to alienate England from the Greater Britain beyond the seas. Before the American Revolution, it seemed by no means impossible that by tact and patience a system of colonial defence might have been established which, without imposing a serious burden on the English colonies, would have rendered them practically secure against attack. But the unfortunate conduct and issue of the American dispute made such an attempt impossible, and the policy of Grenville was abandoned.

At last, however, towards the middle of the nineteenth century an attempt has been made in another form to realise it in part. England still undertakes the full naval defence of her colonies, but she has withdrawn from them all, or nearly all, their Imperial garrisons, and they in their turn have established large militia and volunteer forces which are intended at once to secure them from the possibility of successful attack, and to relieve the mother country from the burden of their military defence. Still later unequivocal signs appeared that those intelligent, patriotic, and vigorous communities which have grown up under the shadow of the British rule were not indifferent to their position as members of a great historic empire and were fully prepared to take their part in its defence. Dispositions of this kind have of late years

shown themselves in some of the Colonial Legislatures which form, in an age of much political discouragement and scepticism, the most auspicious omen for the future of the Empire.

I have now enumerated the principal measures of internal policy which were carried during the years we are considering; but perhaps the most valuable part of the work of Pitt was that complete restoration and reorganisation of English finance which we have already in part considered. The fears of bankruptcy which had pressed so heavily upon English statesmen in the closing years of the American war had been completely dispelled, and at a time when France was plunged in hopeless financial embarrassments the English finances were steadily flourishing and improving. In his Budget speech of 1790, Pitt was able to state that since 1786 only 1,000,000*l.* had been raised in the form of loan, and that, in spite of very considerable extraordinary expenses beyond those of a peace establishment, 5,184,000*l.* of the 3 per cent. loan had been discharged since 1785, and annuities amounting to 200,000*l.* had fallen in. 'The country,' he said, 'at this moment is in a situation of prosperity far greater than in the most flourishing period before the last war.'

England was so far from ruined by the loss of America that the export of British manufactured goods in the last year exceeded by more than 3,000,000*l.* the average of the six prosperous years which immediately preceded the American war, while the imports into British harbours were larger than in any previous year, and the number of ships and sailors had proportionately increased.[1] The taxation was no doubt very heavy. Nearly 16,000,000*l.* had been raised during each of the last three years,[2] but the wealth of the country was

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 698–700. [2] Ibid. 698.

fully able to bear it, and in nearly all its branches the revenue showed a tendency to increase. In the preceding year the shop tax, which had proved exceedingly unpopular, was repealed, and some other taxes were imposed to replace it, among others a tax on newspapers and advertisements. Tobacco, which had become the great article for smuggling, had been transferred from the Customs to the Excise. It was computed that the revenue would gain no less than 300,000*l.* a year by this change, and several other measures had been taken to annihilate smuggling.

The budget of 1791 was in one respect less favourable, for the danger of a war with Spain had rendered necessary large and rapid armaments, and an additional and exceptional expenditure of more than 2,800,000*l.* had been incurred. But in spite of this expense Pitt was able to assert that the credit of the country had never stood higher, and, unlike most of his predecessors, he determined to discharge the new debt by taxation, spread over four years.[1] The anticipations respecting the produce of these new taxes were amply verified, and the long and splendid speech with which he introduced his budget in February 1792 glowed with the richest colours of hope and exultation. It was indeed a magnificent picture of the growing prosperity of England; a noble monument of his own skill, both in financial statement and financial legis-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 1005-1009. In a letter to Sir R. Keith, dated Feb. 9, 1791, Lord Auckland wrote: 'Notwithstanding the interruption arising from the Spanish business, the nett revenue of 1790 was sixteen millions, being near 400,000*l.* more than ever was known; and a degree of opulence is now circulating through the country with an unexampled energy and activity both in agriculture and manufactures. . . . The measures for paying the late expenses are executing without trouble or any apparent sensation in the country.'—Smyth's *Mems. of Sir R. Keith*, ii. 377.

lation; and, at the same time, a mournful illustration of the fallacy and imperfection that mingle with all human predictions. The total revenue of the country, he said, from January 5, 1791, to January 5, 1792, was 16,730,000*l.*, irrespectively of the newly imposed temporary taxes; that of the preceding year had been 16,418,000*l.*, and the average of the last four years had been 16,212,000*l.* Looking back to a longer period and comparing the condition of the country with that of 1783, the first year of peace after the American war, the revenue had increased to the extent of little less than 4,000,000*l.* Of this, rather more than 1,000,000*l.* was due to the additional taxes which he had imposed; 1,000,000*l.* had been gained in those articles in which special and separate regulations had been made for the prevention of smuggling and other fraud; the remainder was diffused over articles of general consumption, and was the consequence and the proof of the rapidly increasing prosperity of the country. He showed that the imports which in 1782, the last year of the war, amounted to 9,714,000*l.*, had increased in every succeeding year, and amounted in 1790 to 19,130,000*l.* The total of the exports in 1782 was 12,239,000*l.* After the Peace, it rose, in 1783, to 14,741,000*l.*, and in the year 1790 it was 20,120,000*l.* The last additional duty, included in the Post Office Revenue, had been imposed in 1784. In 1785, the Post Office yielded 238,000*l.* Last year it produced 338,000*l.* In the mean time, a progress unprecedented in any former period had been made in diminishing the National Debt, and he calculated that in fifteen years the period contemplated in the Act of 1786 would have arrived, when the Sinking Fund would amount to 4,000,000*l.* a year, and when its further disposition would have to be determined by fresh legislation. He announced that he had now a surplus of rather more

than 400,000*l*. to dispose of; and he proposed to apply it in equal proportions to the diminution of taxes and the reduction of debt, selecting for special diminution those taxes which weighed upon the poorer classes. The reduction of the debt, he still maintained, should be the cardinal object of financial policy; and not content with the very considerable steps which had been already taken, he now announced his intention to introduce a prospective law intended to provide a permanent remedy against the danger of future accumulations of debt, by enacting that every additional loan should be accompanied by a separate sinking fund, sufficient to pay it off in a defined number of years, and appropriated exclusively to that purpose.

He concluded his speech in a strain of justifiable exultation. 'The present prosperity of England,' he said, 'was unexampled.' 'The season of our severe trial is at an end, and we are at length relieved not only from the dejection and gloom which a few years since hung over the country, but from the doubt and uncertainty which, even for a considerable time after our prospects had begun to brighten, still mingled with the hopes and expectations of the public. . . . As far as there can be any reliance on human speculations, we have the best ground from the experience of the past to look with satisfaction to the present and with confidence to the future.' Much of this prosperity, he said, was due to causes which lay beyond the sphere of political acts; to the spontaneous enterprise and industry of the country, and to the normal increase of capital; but much also must be ascribed to the commercial treaty with France, and to the wise adjustment of the whole system of customs and taxation on principles which had never before been so well understood or so skilfully elucidated. 'The great work of Adam Smith,' said Pitt, 'will, I believe, furnish the best solu-

tion to every question connected with the history of commerce and with the systems of political economy.' But above these immediate causes of industrial prosperity lay others which were still more important. Sound politics are the essential condition of permanent material prosperity. The security and prosperity of England; the solidity of credit; the rapid increase of capital; the rapid expansion of industry, are all necessarily connected with the duration of peace, the continuation of which on a secure and permanent footing must ever be the first object of the foreign policy of this country,' and with the maintenance of a constitution in which liberty and law are indissolubly united; which 'practically secures the tranquillity and welfare both of individuals and of the public, and provides, beyond any other frame of government which has ever existed, for the real and useful ends which form at once the only true foundation and only rational object of all political societies.' [1]

No one can read this speech without perceiving that it was the speech of a man who was pre-eminently marked out, both by his wishes and by his talents, to be a great peace minister. Pitt had, however, learnt too much from his father to suffer an exclusive attention to financial considerations to make him indifferent either to the security or to the dignity of England. One of the most serious dangers of modern popular politics is that gambling spirit which, in order to lower estimates and reduce taxation, leaves the country unprotected, trusting that the chapter of accidents will save it from attack. The reduction of taxes is at once felt and produces an immediate reputation, while expenditure which is intended to guard against remote, contingent, and unseen dangers seldom brings any credit to a statesman.

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 816-838.

It is very possible for an English minister to go on year by year so starving the military and naval estimates as to leave the country permanently exposed to invasion, without exciting any general popular apprehension. The warnings of a few competent specialists are easily drowned; each successive reduction of taxation produces increased popularity, and if, owing to the course of politics, an invasion does not take place, writers are sure to arise who will maintain that the event has justified the wisdom of the statesman. It would be as reasonable to argue that, because a house does not happen to have been burnt, the owner had shown wisdom and prudence in refusing to insure it. Among the many noble characteristics of the ministry of Lord Palmerston, none is more deserving of admiration than the consistency and resolution with which he maintained the principle that it is the first duty of an English minister to provide at all costs that his country shall be practically secure from the possibility of a successful invasion, and shall not be found in a condition of impotence if unforeseen danger should suddenly arise. Pitt was of the same school, and he never allowed the armaments of the country to sink into neglect. He was much impressed with the fact that, in 1761 and 1762, Martinique, with a garrison of only 800 men, had held out by means of its fortifications for a whole year against a large English army, and that in the last war Dominica had been taken by the French merely because the English soldiers had no fort to retire to till the fleet could afford them relief. He accordingly carried in 1789 an important scheme for extending the fortifications of the West Indies; he at the same time strengthened the naval forces both in the East Indies and in the Mediterranean; and when, two years later, serious complications had arisen with Spain, it was the promptness

and efficiency of the British naval force that chiefly averted the danger.

The dispute was of the same kind as that which had led to the Spanish war under Walpole. Some English merchants had begun to seek for the Chinese market furs and ginseng, a vegetable largely employed for medicinal purposes in China, along the north-west coast of America, and had planted an English trading settlement at Nootka Sound, on Vancouver's Island, near the coast of California. It was a country which had been discovered by Magellan, and first seriously explored by Captain Cook, and it had hitherto been entirely unoccupied by Europeans. The Spaniards had never penetrated to it, but by virtue of a bull of Alexander VI. they claimed a sovereignty over all lands comprised between Cape Horn and the 60th degree of north latitude—in other words, the entire western coast both of South and North America, and when after a considerable interval they discovered the existence of a British settlement in these distant parts, they determined to suppress it. Two Spanish ships of war accordingly hastened to Nootka Sound, took possession of the British settlement, hauled down the British flag, replaced it by the flag of Spain, captured four English vessels, and treated their crews with extreme harshness and indignity.

These events took place in the April of 1789. A few months later, accounts, at first dim and confused, but afterwards more complete, arrived in Europe, and it soon appeared likely that the affair would assume a most formidable character. Complaints were made on both sides. The Spanish ambassador in London was instructed to desire that the subjects of Great Britain should no longer be allowed to trade, settle, or fish on the western coast of America, while the English denied the rights of Spain to this unoccupied coast, and de-

manded a restitution of the captured vessels, with their properties and crews, an indemnification for the losses they had suffered, and a reparation to his Majesty for the insult that had been offered to the British flag. The money value of the Nootka Sound trade and settlement was very small, and certainly not sufficient to compensate for a week of war; but a question of honour and a question of future right of settlement had been raised, which could not be suffered to drop. The Spaniards answered the remonstrances of England by stating that the English vessels had been already released and their offence condoned on the ground of their ignorance of the rights of Spain, but they would give no satisfaction or indemnification; they asserted in the strongest terms their exclusive sovereignty over the whole of the western coast of America, and they rapidly collected and equipped a great fleet.' Pitt promptly replied by a general impressment of sailors, and by a message to Parliament asking for assistance to defend the honour and interests of the country.

A vote of credit for a million was at once passed; the fleet was put upon a war footing; each party began to seek for alliances; and it seemed possible that this petty dispute would lead to a general conflagration. Holland and Prussia were appealed to by England, in conformity with the late treaty of alliance. Spain, on the other hand, negotiated with Russia, which was now on bad terms with England; but she especially relied on the assistance of France, which was bound to her by the treaty of 1762. The Revolution was now running its course in that country, and the direction of its policy was very doubtful. Montmorin, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, appears to have inclined to war, and a considerable party hoped that it would give a new turn to the popular passions which had become so formidable at home. Montmorin, in obedience to the treaty of

alliance, prepared a French fleet, but he held an ambiguous and undecided language, and offered or suggested a French mediation. Lafayette, whose influence was at this time very great, and who detested England, was a strong partisan of war, but the Jacobin opposition vehemently repudiated it. Nothing, they maintained, could be now more dangerous to the Revolution, nothing would be more likely to save the monarchy, than a foreign war. D'Aiguillon, Robespierre, Lamotte, and above all Barnave, denounced the policy which, in order to stifle the Revolution, was about to plunge France into bankruptcy, and invoke the spirit of conquest in opposition to the spirit of liberty, and they desired to take the power of declaring war from the King. Mirabeau on other grounds was opposed to war, and it was finally agreed that peace and war should for the future be voted by the Chamber, though only on the proposal and with the sanction of the King.[1]

This decision made it certain that France would not assist Spain in the war, and the latter country therefore found it absolutely necessary to recede. A skilful negotiator, named Fitzherbert, had been sent to Madrid, and, after some hesitation, a convention was drawn up and signed in October 1790 which substantially satisfied the English demands. It was agreed that Spain should restore the buildings and tract of land taken from British subjects on Nootka Sound and make reparation for all subsequent acts of violence; and the right of navigating and fishing in the Pacific Ocean, and making commercial settlements on its coasts, was secured to both nations under the following restrictions. British vessels were forbidden to approach within ten sea leagues of any part of the coast actually occupied by the Spaniards. The Spaniards and British subjects were to have equal and unrestricted liberty to trade in

[1] See Sybel, *Hist. de l'Europe*, i. 177-182.

all parts of the north-west of America and of the adjacent islands situated to the north of the settlements already occupied by Spain; but neither were to form any settlement on the east or west coasts of South America southward of the Spanish settlements. The success of this negotiation added greatly to the reputation of Pitt and to the prestige of England in Europe, though the cost of the episode, amounting, as we have seen, to nearly three millions, remained to be provided for in the Budget of 1791.

In other quarters the aspect of affairs outside England was menacing and disquieting. In September 1786 Lord Cornwallis had taken possession of power as Governor-General of India. His administration is memorable in Indian history for many important internal reforms, and especially for a settlement of land ownership and land taxation, which has been a fertile source of controversy to our own day. It is also memorable for one of the most formidable native wars in which England has ever been engaged. We have seen, in a former volume, the long, desperate, and doubtful conflict which Hyder Ali, the Sultan of Mysore, had waged against the power of England, and we have seen also that after his death it was continued for a year by his son Tippoo Sahib, with such indecisive results that the Peace of Mangalore, which terminated it in 1784, left both of the contending parties the whole territory they had possessed before the war began. In 1790 an attack which Tippoo Sahib had made some months before, upon the Rajah of Travancore, who was allied with the English, again brought the old antagonists into the field. The English were assisted by powerful native alliances, but the war was conducted by Tippoo with extraordinary courage and ability, and it was marked by several vicissitudes. At first the English carried everything before them, but

they encountered a serious reverse at a place called Sattimungul, and several well-fought conflicts in the latter part of 1790 left the fortunes of the war still divided and ambiguous. Tippoo Sahib brought armies of more than forty thousand men into the field, and he showed no inconsiderable skill in strategy. Cornwallis commanded the English in person during the greater part of the war, and after several bloody and obstinate battles, which it is not necessary here to describe, he succeeded, in March 1792, in bringing it to a complete and glorious termination. Seringapatam, the capital of Mysore, was invested and reduced to extremities, and Tippoo Sahib was obliged to sign a peace, surrendering half his dominions to the allies, paying a sum of more than four millions sterling in compensation for the war, releasing all his prisoners of war, and giving up two of his three sons as hostages to the English.

In Europe, foreign politics had long been obscured and troubled by the ambition of Catherine II. This extraordinary woman, the daughter of a poor Prussian prince, had obtained, by the deposition and murder of her husband in 1762, a wider and more perfect range of absolute authority than any other European sovereign, and, in spite of a levity and a caprice which were the despair of foreign statesmen and diplomatists, and which often induced them greatly to underrate her capacities,[1] her reign was one of the greatest and most successful in the eighteenth century. Assimilating with extraordinary rapidity the noblest political ideas

[1] See, e.g., the curious letters of Sir J. Harris in the *Malmesbury Correspondence*. That very able diplomatist, while acknowledging that Catherine was a woman of great talents, great courage, and sometimes of great resolution, evidently believed that her successes were in a large measure those of a fortunate gambler, and that she was wholly incapable of pursuing any one line of policy by system, or through a sober and unimpassioned calculation of interests.

of the most advanced thinkers of her time, thoroughly conversant with their writings in a country where serious study was almost unknown,[1] enlightened, tolerant and generous, good-natured and forgiving almost to a fault, a warm and steady friend, delighting in the happiness of those who were immediately about her,[2] perfectly free from all kinds of superstition, and perfectly undazzled by the unrealities and conventionalities of her position,—she retained, amid all the excesses of an abandoned and shameless life, a strange power of wisely measuring and employing the capacities of men, and of pursuing, with rare political judgment and indomitable resolution, certain great lines of policy. In a few years she made the dreams of Peter the Great all but a reality. The internal administration of Russia in nearly all its branches was reformed. A new code of legislation was established; torture was abolished; religious toleration was extended; hospitals and other institutions of benevolence were extensively founded; measures were taken to encourage the arts and sciences, and improve agriculture; the army and navy were reorganised; an attempt was even made to

[1] See the very emphatic remarks of that most competent judge, the Princess Daschkaw.—*Memoirs of the Princess Daschkaw* (edited by Mrs. Bradford), i. 13.

[2] Much light has been thrown on these sides of the character of Catherine by the publication of her very confidential correspondence with Grimm. One passage I must quote as an illustration. The Empress (she is writing in 1791) complains to Grimm that she is getting so old that there are families about her of whom she has known the fifth or sixth generations. 'Voilà de grandes preuves de vieillesse, et même ce récit en tient peut-être, mais que faire? Et malgré cela j'aime à la folie et comme un enfant de cinq ans à voir jouer au colinmaillard et à tous les jeux d'enfants possibles. Les jeunes gens et mes petits-fils et filles disent qu'il faut que j'y sois pour que la gaîté y règne à leur gré, et qu'ils sont plus hardis et à leur aise quand j'y suis que sans moi. C'est donc moi qui suis le "Lustigmacher."'—*Corresp. de Cath. et Grimm*, p. 592.

form a third estate, and at the same time a skilful, ambitious, and perfectly unscrupulous foreign policy gave the Empress a complete ascendency in Northern and Eastern Europe. 'I came to Russia,' she once said, 'a poor girl; Russia has dowered me richly, but I have paid her back with Azof, the Crimea, and the Ukraine.' In 1772, by the first iniquitous partition of Poland, she acquired a territory comprising an area of 2,500 geographical square miles, and a population of about one and a half millions; and by steadily maintaining anarchy in the remainder of the kingdom she prepared the way for its future downfall. In 1774 she terminated her first Turkish war by the Treaty of Kainardji, which severed the Crimea from Turkey, constituted it into a separate khanate, and, beside some accession of territory, gave Russia a protectorate over Greek Christians at Constantinople and admitted Russian commerce to the Black Sea.

In the beginning of 1784 she took another gigantic stride, and without a war she succeeded in incorporating the whole of the Crimea in the Russian Empire. Her position in the war which grew out of the American Revolution was beyond comparison the proudest in Europe, for her help was equally and almost abjectly courted by both sides; while, as the originator of the armed neutrality, she placed herself at the head of the neutral Powers. Her commercial treaty with England in 1766, with Denmark in 1782, with Austria in 1785, and with France in 1787 increased her influence and power; and now her great object was the total destruction of the Turkish Empire, the partition of its territory, and the construction of a Greek empire, which would be subservient to her influence.

The policy was not altogether a new one. Turkey, Catherine once said, is the natural enemy of Russia, as France is of England; and the gradual extension of

Russian dominion along the shores of the Black Sea toward the Mediterranean had been, from the days of Peter the Great, a favourite object of Russian policy. By the conquest, in 1696, of the strong fortress and port of Azof, by the fortification of the port of Taganrog on the Black Sea, and by the commencement of a Black Sea fleet, Peter himself had done much for its accomplishment; but a few years later a great Russian defeat in Moldavia undid the work, and in 1711 the Peace of the Pruth deprived him of all that in this quarter he had won. The campaigns of Munich between 1735 and 1739 gave the Russians for a time Azof and Oczakow, and complete dominion over Moldavia, and a Russian army penetrated into the Crimea; but at the Peace of Belgrade in 1739 the tide was again rolled back. With the exception of Azof, which was deprived of its fortifications, Russia retained scarcely a vestige of her Turkish conquests; and an article of the peace specially forbade the formation of a Russian fleet in the Black Sea.

The struggle between the two rivals was not renewed till the war of Catherine, and it was at this time that the project of making serious use of Greek discontent seems first to have arisen.[1] The Orloffs, whose star was then in the ascendant, warmly supported it; and a Russian fleet from the Baltic, commanded by Alexis Orloff, the murderer of Peter III., entered the Mediterranean in 1770, defeated a Turkish fleet at Scio, burned it at Tchesme near the Bay of Smyrna, and provoked in the Morea some abortive but bloody risings, which were savagely repressed. The expulsion of the Mohammedans from Europe, which had

[1] Some slight communications had before been kept up between the Russians and the Greek priests under Turkish rule, but they do not appear to have had much importance. See Sorel, *La Question d'Orient au XVIII^me siècle*, pp. 11, 12.

long been the favourite dream of Christian fanaticism, now somewhat strangely found its warmest advocate in Voltaire, who, in letters both to Catherine and to Frederick, set forth the independence of Greece and the partition of the other Ottoman dominions in Europe as the noblest objects for their ambition. In a little work, called 'Le Tocsin des Rois,' which was written in 1771, he endeavoured to overcome the opposition of Maria Theresa, and to enlist her services in the cause. If the continental Christian Powers would only, he said, lay aside for a short time their jealousies and join against the Turkish barbarians, a single campaign would undoubtedly give Bosnia and Bulgaria to Austria, while the victorious armies of Catherine would march upon Constantinople. The project of establishing a Greek empire which would be practically dependent on Russia was passionately adopted by Potemkin, who for many years had the greatest influence over Russian foreign policy, and in the latter years of his life it was almost the only object at which he aimed.

The attitude of other nations on the Eastern question presents some singular contrasts. From the time when Francis I. defied the theological passions and prejudices of Europe by allying himself with the Turks, France had usually openly or secretly favoured them, and she had gradually obtained the greater part of the Levant trade, which was one of the chief elements of the prosperity of Marseilles. To Russia she was almost always hostile. As the leading continental Power she was keenly sensible to the dangers of Russian ambition and aggression. She usually inspired the anti-Russian party at Constantinople, at Stockholm, and in Poland; and the complete temporary eclipse of French influence that followed the fall of Choiseul was one of the chief causes of that great crime and calamity, the first partition of Poland. As the leading Mediterranean

Power, France was especially interested in protecting Turkey, and she was quite resolved that Russia should obtain no footing in the southern seas.

England, on the other hand, during the greater part of the eighteenth century was closely allied to Russia, both commercially and politically. Her commerce with Russia was extremely profitable. She brought to her the goods of the Indies and of Western Europe, and received in return the maritime stores that were essential to her fleet. Politically, English statesmen, who were mainly governed by jealousy of France, looked upon Russia as a great counterpoise to that State, and saw with pleasure the very considerable part which in the eighteenth century she had begun to take in Western politics. In 1766 Chatham made an earnest, though unsuccessful, attempt to form a Northern Alliance of Russia, Prussia, and Great Britain to counteract the family compact of the House of Bourbon.[1] In 1770, when a Russian fleet for the first time appeared with hostile intentions in the Mediterranean, Choiseul proposed to despatch a French fleet to destroy it, and Spain would probably have supported him; but England interposed in this very critical moment of the Eastern question, and informed the cabinets of Versailles and Madrid that she would regard any attempt to arrest the progress of the Russian fleet as an act of hostility to herself.[2] Three years later, when the war against the Turks was at its height, Chatham wrote to Shelburne: 'Your lordship well knows I am quite a Russ. I trust the Ottoman will pull down the House of Bourbon in his fall;'[3] and he always maintained that it ought to be

[1] *Chatham Correspondence*, iii. 80-32, 36, 37, 79, 86, 174, 175.

[2] Malmesbury's *Diaries and Correspondence*, i. 256; Dyer's *Hist. of Modern Europe*, iv. 207; Ségur, *Politique de tous les Cabinets de l'Europe*, ii. 174.

[3] *Chatham Correspondence*, iv. 298, 299.

an essential part of English foreign policy to enter into no kind of connection with the Turks.[1] In 1781, when England was reduced to almost the lowest state of depression by the American war and by the hostility of France, Spain, and Holland, she endeavoured to purchase the mediation and assistance of Russia by offering a perpetual defensive alliance and the island of Minorca, which would have given her a secure position in the Mediterranean; but after much hesitation, and contrary to the advice of Potemkin, Catherine rejected an offer which would have probably involved her in an immediate war.[2] The resentment produced in England by this refusal, and by the unfriendly conduct of Russia in the matter of the armed neutrality, was still further increased by the crushing duties which Russia imposed, in 1783, on most articles of British produce, and by a navigation law which, in the same year, cut off the profitable carrying trade between Russia and Southern Europe, which had hitherto been enjoyed by British vessels.[3] Still the permanent policy of England and France remained unchanged. In 1783 and 1784, when Russia took complete possession of the Crimea, France strongly and earnestly remonstrated; England used her political influence steadily in favour of Russian aggrandisement; and it was probably in a large degree owing to that influence that Russia was able without a war with France to establish at Sebastopol her ascendency on the Black Sea.[4]

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[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 39, 52.

[2] Malmesbury's *Diaries and Correspondence*, i. 345, 364, 373-375, 399-402, 438.

[3] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 38, 39.

[4] On June 30, 1783, Harris wrote from St. Petersburg: 'The Emperor's communication of his having formed an alliance with Russia, and of the Empress's intentions on the Crimea, to France, has produced a strong representation from that Court to this, in which, after expressing directly their surprise at her Imperial Majesty's still forming new claims on the Turks, and indirectly

The annexation of the Crimea was chiefly accomplished during the brief period of the Coalition Ministry, and Fox, who then directed English foreign affairs, showed himself as Russian as Chatham had been. 'My system of foreign politics,' he wrote to Harris, 'is deeply rooted. Alliances with the Northern Powers ever have been, and ever will be, the system of every enlightened Englishman.'[1] His favourite policy, he said, was an alliance of England with Prussia, Denmark, and Russia; but if the dissension between Russia and Prussia rendered this impossible, he was prepared to enter into an alliance with Denmark, Russia, and the Emperor.[2] One of the reproaches which Fox

denying the justness of their claims, the King of France makes a tender of his mediation . . . pointing out the uncertainty of the success of war, and the serious and "incalculable" consequences with which her persisting in this measure may be attended. . . . The Empress is exceedingly angry.' Eight weeks later, having received instructions from England, Harris reported to Fox his conversations with Russian ministers about the annexation of the Crimea and the attitude of France. 'I confined myself to such general observations as naturally present themselves on such an occasion, and endeavoured to make them feel that, fatigued by a long and expensive war, the services my Court could render her Imperial Majesty by a strong exertion of its political influence would be both more efficacious and more agreeable than any others, however well disposed we might be to employ them in her behalf. I must, in justice to the Russian ministers, say that they admitted entirely these ideas, entered in the most proper manner into our situation, and gave me clearly to understand that, unless either of the Bourbon Courts should take such steps as would directly attack our interests, the Empress did not expect more from us than what we had done for her in the last Turkish war. On Sunday, previously to my taking leave, the Vice-Chancellor told me that he had her Imperial Majesty's orders to express the warmest gratitude for this undoubted mark of the King's attention to the interests of her empire.'—Malmesbury's *Diaries and Correspondence*, ii. 48, 56.

[1] Malmesbury's *Diaries and Correspondence*, ii. 40. See, too, his own striking account of his policy at the time of the annexation of the Crimea. *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 63.

[2] Malmesbury's *Diaries*, ii. 51, 52.

brought against Shelburne was that he appeared at this time to prefer a French to a Northern alliance, and that he was believed to share the views of Vergennes about the Eastern question.[1]

What those views were may be gathered from a very remarkable confidential paper on the dangers impending in Eastern Europe, which was drawn up by Vergennes in October 1782, shortly before the termination of the American war, for the instruction of Montmorin, who was then French ambassador at Madrid. The Emperor and the King of Prussia, he said, were competing for the favour of Catherine, and although Russia was at this time occupied with troubles in the Crimea, it was probable that those very troubles might lead in the near future to most serious dangers. If the three Powers should ever agree to give a mortal blow to the Turks, France would soon bitterly regret that she had been unable to prevent it. If an active and enlightened Power obtained possession of the Eastern provinces which touched the Adriatic, she would soon become the mistress of Italy, and there would be a total change in the continental system and in the balance of power. France alone was not strong enough to oppose it, but France and England united might do so, and it was plainly for the interest of England also, that the balance of power in Europe should not be overturned. For these reasons Vergennes considered that it was of great importance to France that the war with England should be speedily terminated, and that the latter Power should not be so weakened or so hopelessly alienated as to be unable or unwilling to co-operate with France in maintaining the European continental system.[2]

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[1] Malmesbury's *Diaries*, ii. 50, 51, 54.

[2] Circourt, *Hist. de l'Action commune de la France et de l'Amérique*, iii. 330-333. A saying of Vergennes on the Eastern question is reported to have greatly struck Joseph II.: 'Une

A triple alliance of Russia, Prussia, and the Emperor for the partition of Turkey, which Vergennes so greatly feared, and which Voltaire had done his best to effect, seemed at one time very probable. In 1769 such an alliance had actually been proposed by Russia, and in 1772, when the partition of Poland was impending, Austria had suggested the partial dismemberment of Turkey. It was a suggestion of aggravated treachery, for scarcely a year had passed since Austria had allied herself with Turkey, had promised to obtain the restoration of the territory which Russia had invaded, and had received a considerable Turkish subsidy.[1] Frederick the Great, however, entirely rejected this policy. He calculated that Turkish assistance might be very useful to Prussia in a war either with Russia or with Austria, and that another field of spoliation might be more easily and more profitably secured. In the beginning of the reign of Catherine he had been her close ally, and he spared no flattery to win her favour and no expense to secure her counsellors. Count Panin was especially at the head of the Prussian party at St. Petersburg, and the alliance had two consequences of great importance. The first partition of Poland was mainly due to Frederick and Catherine, for although, when it had become inevitable, Maria Theresa reluctantly acquiesced in it and consented to accept a portion of the territory, the whole initiative

partition de l'Empire Ottoman n'est pas difficile, mais je ne vois pas la compensation pour Constantinople.'—*Auckland Correspondence*, i. 221. Vergennes had proposed to Fox to join him in his remonstrance to Russia against the seizure of the Crimea in 1783, but Fox peremptorily declined.—*Parl. Hist.* xxix. 63. It is one of the many proofs of the remarkable prescience of this French statesman, that he had expressed his alarm during the Turkish war of 1769 lest that war should lead to a partition of Poland—a prediction which was perfectly verified by the event. See Sorel, *Question d'Orient au XVIIIme siècle*, p. 37.

[1] Ibid. pp. 48–51, 208, 213, 217.

lay with the other two conspirators. It is difficult to exaggerate the extent to which it shook the political system, lowered the public morals, and weakened the public law of Europe, for it was an example of strong Powers conspiring to plunder a feeble Power, with no more regard for honour, or honesty, or the mere decency of appearances than is shown by a burglar or a footpad. The Prussian alliance had also a very serious and persistent influence in alienating Russia from England during the very critical years of the American struggle, for Frederick, from the time when he was deserted by Lord Bute, looked upon England with a more than political malevolence. On the other hand, the alliance gave Russia no assistance in her projects upon Turkey, while Maria Theresa, as sovereign of Austria and Hungary, was vitally interested in preventing a Russian ascendency in Eastern Europe. In Catherine's first Turkish war the Russians occupied Moldavia and Wallachia, but the Austrians at once prepared to ally themselves with the Turks, and these provinces were in consequence relinquished.

The death of Maria Theresa in 1780 and the accession of Joseph II. to his full power gave a complete change to Eastern politics. The character of Joseph is a curious study. He was undoubtedly superior in intelligence to the average of European monarchs; he was as exemplary as his mother in the industry with which he devoted himself to the duties of his office, and he had a most real desire to leave the world better than he found it; but a deplorable want of sound judgment, of moral scruple, and of firmness and persistency of will, made him at once one of the most dangerous and most unfortunate sovereigns of his time. Ambitious, fond of power, and at the same time feverishly restless and impatient, his mind was in the highest degree susceptible to the political ideas that were floating through

the intellectual atmosphere of Europe, and he was an inveterate dreamer of dreams. Large, comprehensive, and startling schemes of policy—radical changes in institutions, manners, tendencies, habits, and traditions—had for him an irresistible fascination; and when he saw, or thought he saw, the bourne to which political forces were tending, it was his natural impulse to endeavour to attain it at once. Sometimes skilful in designing, but never skilful in executing, the sarcasm of Frederick, that Joseph always took the second step before he had taken the first, was well justified. What obstacles, traditions, prejudices, manners, settled beliefs and tones of thought place in the path of the most powerful reformer—how necessary it is even for a despotic sovereign to consult times and seasons, and to seek in his reforms for the line of least resistance—Joseph never understood, and the result was that his policy in nearly all its parts was a deplorable failure. In foreign affairs it consisted chiefly of daring and adventurous enterprises, rashly undertaken and fitfully and irresolutely conducted. In domestic affairs it consisted partly of great reforms in perfect accordance with the most enlightened political speculation of his time, but forced into a precipitate maturity, with no regard for the habits, wishes, and prejudices of his subjects, and partly of a series of unjustifiable attempts to destroy the restraints which, in some parts of his dominions, custom and law had imposed upon his authority.

In 1780 he first met Catherine in Poland, and he afterwards accompanied her to St. Petersburg. His object was to weaken the Prussian influence, and in this he succeeded; but he soon fell under the spell of the great Empress, and his romantic nature caught up with eagerness Voltaire's idea of a Greek empire and a partition of Turkey. In 1783, in direct opposition to the settled policy of Austria, and especially to the policy of

his mother during the last Turkish war, he assisted with all his influence the Russians in acquiring the Crimea, and even sent an army to the frontier to intimidate the Turks.[1] The death of Panin in 1783, and the death of Frederick the Great in August 1786, strengthened the alliance, and in 1787 Joseph accompanied Catherine in her triumphant journey to Kherson and the Crimea. The determination to revive a Greek empire at Constantinople was no longer concealed. Catherine had already named her second grandson Constantine, clothed him in Greek dress, procured Greek nurses to instruct him in the language of his future subjects, ordered a medal to be struck representing on one side the head of the young Prince, and on the other a cross in the clouds, from which a flash of lightning descended upon the mosque of St. Sophia.[2] The Turkish names of the newly acquired territory on the Black Sea were abolished, and their Greek names revived. A great body of troops was collected to welcome the Empress. At Kherson she made her public entry through a magnificent arch, which bore the inscription, 'The way to Byzantium,' and at Sebastopol she reviewed the considerable Russian fleet which now rode triumphantly upon the waters of the Euxine.

Throughout the Turkish Empire, Russian agents were incessantly employed in preparing the way for the intended enterprise. They excited, or assisted, an insurrection which had broken out in Egypt. They steadily sowed dissension in Greece. The Hospodar of Moldavia had long been in the pay of the Courts of St. Petersburg and Vienna, and when his treachery was discovered, he fled to Russian territory and the Empress refused to surrender him. Russian consuls

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[1] Coxe's *House of Austria*, ii. 593, 594.
[2] Ibid. p. 551.

were the special centres of intrigue, and the Government insisted on establishing one at Varna, within 120 miles of Constantinople. There were constant complaints of injustices done to Turkish commerce, of violences done to Turkish sailors, and no redress could be obtained. Demands were now put forward by Russia for a total renunciation of Turkish sovereignty over Georgia; for the surrender of Bessarabia, on the ground that it had once belonged to the Tartar khans; for the establishment of hereditary governors in Moldavia and Wallachia, which would have made these provinces virtually independent of the Porte.[1]

As early as 1786 the Sultan had issued an address to the Mohammedan world describing in touching and eloquent terms the seizure of the Crimea in time of peace; the steady encroachments of Russia on the Black Sea coast; the attempts of Russian agents to withdraw Turkish vassals from Turkish rule and to produce insurrection among the beys of Egypt; and he had warned true believers that a struggle was at hand, when their religion and all that was dear to them would be at stake.[2] The condition of Europe seemed in the highest degree unfavourable to them. Poland was now perfectly tranquil, and was likely to afford no assistance and no diversion, and France could no longer be counted on as a friend, and might possibly even be feared as an enemy. There was, indeed, a party in the French ministry who contended, in accordance with the ideas of Vergennes, that it was an essential French interest to join with England for the preservation of the Turkish Empire,[3] but other counsels seemed likely to prevail. In October 1787, Pitt wrote confidentially to Eden, who was then envoy in France,

[1] See *Annual Register*, 1788, pp. 2-11.

[2] Ibid. 1786, pp. 151, 152.

[3] *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 220, 232, 245-249.

asking whether there was any foundation for the idea prevalent at Paris, that France, instead of supporting Turkey, was meditating a junction with Austria and Russia, and he intimated that such a policy might drag England into the Eastern question, in which she desired to take no part.[1] Soon after, alarming intelligence was received from St. Petersburg of French negotiations in that city with the object of forming a triple alliance of France, Austria, and Russia against Turkey, and there were rumours that France might possibly be bribed by the possession of Egypt.[2] She appears in truth to have been undecided and divided on the Eastern question, but on other grounds very desirous of the friendship of Russia. The close union of England, Prussia, and Holland naturally inclined her in that direction, and it was a significant fact that Russia refused to renew her commercial treaty with England, which expired in 1786, and a few months later negotiated one with France.[3] The policy of the Emperor was not doubtful, and it was certain to be hostile to Turkey. For a long period there had been formal and perfect peace between the two empires, and the Turks had fulfilled their treaty obligations with the most scrupulous and honourable fidelity. During the whole of the long and often most disastrous war of Maria Theresa, when the House of Austria had been reduced to the most desperate straits, when Hungary had been again and again left open and unprotected, the Turks had never suffered either cupidity, or fanaticism, or a desire to regain their ancient power, or the example of Christian princes, to persuade them to break their plighted word or to attack their defenceless neighbour. Their reward was that, without a shadow of provocation and through

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 217.

[2] Ibid. 222, 293, 302, 303.

[3] Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 116.

mere greed of territory, the son of Maria Theresa was now preparing to invade them.

It was evident that the cloud which was gathering must soon burst. Thousands of Tartars, driven homeless and ruined from the depopulated plains of the Crimea, spread the flame of indignation through the Mussulman population, and the manifest provocation of the proceedings of the Empress in the Crimea, and the new Russian demands that were sent to Constantinople, still further increased it. The Turks met the danger like a military and semi-barbarous people. They rejected absolutely and haughtily the Russian demands; they made a counter-demand for the restoration of the Crimea; they imprisoned the Russian ambassador; and in August 1787 they declared war against Russia.

It was a bold step, and it soon involved half Europe in war. France, indeed, declared her determination to be neutral; she announced that she would throw no obstacles in the way of a Russian fleet in the Mediterranean; she made an unsuccessful attempt at mediation, and for a few months the struggle was confined to the two original combatants. It consisted chiefly of wholly unsuccessful attacks by the Turks on Kinburn, which guards the mouth of the Dnieper, and which was defended with great skill by Suwarrow. But in February 1788, Joseph, having completed his preparations, declared war against the Porte, and immense forces, both of Austrians and Russians, streamed across the frontier. In the war between the Russians and Turks in 1788 the former were almost uniformly successful. The chief events were the total defeat by the Russians of a Turkish fleet in the Liman, and especially the capture of Oczakow by Potemkin. The siege lasted from July to December. Both the attack and the defence were carried on with extraordinary resolution; but the Russians had almost relinquished their enterprise in

despair, when a stray shell blowing up a magazine made the fortifications untenable, and the town was taken, after a scene of appalling carnage.

On the Austrian side, however, the course of events was very chequered. Up to this period, the eighteenth century had proved exceedingly disastrous to the position and influence of Austria in Europe. In the beginning of the century, Prussia was not yet a kingdom, and Russia scarcely counted in Western politics; but both of these nations had now grown into military Powers of the first rank. France had experienced many vicissitudes, but she had at least consolidated her territory by acquiring the important Duchy of Lorraine; she had put an end to the chief peril that menaced her by severing Spain from the Austrian dominions and establishing a branch of the House of Bourbon on the Spanish throne; she had still further strengthened her connection with Spain by the family compact of 1761; she was a great homogeneous kingdom situated amid weak and dependent States, and if signs of decadence and danger might now be traced, they were at least half concealed by the brilliant empire which French literature and ideas exercised over the world. But the House of Austria during this long period had gained nothing of importance, except a section of Poland; it had lost Spain and Naples and Sicily, Belgrade and Silesia, Parma, Placentia, Guastalla and a part of Lombardy; and a great part of the vast hereditary dominions which it retained were so scattered, isolated, and defenceless that they were rather a source of weakness than of strength. On the side of Turkey the vicissitudes of Austrian power had been peculiarly galling to statesmen at Vienna. The great victories of Eugene and the Peace of Passarowitz in 1718 had given Austria, Belgrade, Temeswar, the Bannat, and a part of Servia and Wallachia as far as the Aluta. But the war of

1736 had been disastrous to Austria, and at the Peace of Belgrade, in 1739, she lost everything, except the Bannat, which the Peace of Passarowitz had given her.

To the Turkish war the Emperor looked for compensation for the losses of his House, and he had hopes of acquiring not only Bosnia and Servia, but also Moldavia and Wallachia, and thus extending his borders to the Dniester. The army he brought into the field was estimated at not less than 200,000 men, with 2,000 pieces of artillery; but partly through great dilatoriness and indecision, and partly through the excessive prolongation of his line of operations, he effected nothing this year at all commensurate with the magnitude of his preparations. Loudon and the Prince of Coburg succeeded indeed, at great cost of life, in capturing several important fortresses, and at the close of the year a large part of Moldavia was in the hands of the Austrians; but, on the other hand, two wholly unsuccessful attempts—one of them before the declaration of war—were made to capture Belgrade. A victorious Turkish army devastated a great part of the country near the Bannat. More than one Turkish governor who had seemed to waver in his allegiance turned finally against the Austrians, and in September a successful attack was made on the camp of Joseph near Slatina. The Emperor fled precipitately by night, leaving 4,000 men on the field, and a great part of his baggage and artillery in the hands of the enemy; his hopes of making a military reputation were blasted, and he returned to Vienna disenchanted and profoundly discouraged, carrying with him the seeds of a mortal illness.

Difficulties and discouragements were indeed multiplying rapidly round his path—the refusal of Poland to suffer Imperial troops to march through her territory; the refusal of the Republic of Venice to join in the

league against Turkey or to depart from the strictest neutrality; the refusal of the King of Piedmont to allow any recruiting in his dominions; the failure of an attempt to negotiate an Imperial loan in the Low Countries; the formidable discontents that had shown themselves in Hungary, where Joseph had subverted the ancient Constitution; the spreading insurrection in Austrian Flanders, which threatened dangers of the gravest kind. Potemkin was hostile to the Austrian alliance, and lost no occasion of ridiculing the defensive system of his ally, and the Emperor was soon made aware that Russia was resolved under no possible circumstances to suffer him to retain Moldavia and Wallachia.[1] It had become evident, from the powers of resistance displayed by the Turks, that a Greek empire at Constantinople was a distant dream, but a less ambitious project might probably be attained. Catherine now determined to unite Moldavia, Wallachia, and Bessarabia in a single kingdom, governed by a prince of the Greek rite, who would certainly be the vassal of Russia. It was not openly avowed, but it was well known, that the crown was reserved for Potemkin.[2] Bulgaria, therefore, and some moderate acquisitions in Bosnia, seemed all that Joseph could reasonably expect.

In the meantime the circle of the war was rapidly widening. A century before the time of which I am now writing, Sweden had been indisputably the foremost Power of the North; but the disastrous day of Pultawa had shattered her sceptre, and the Peace of Nystadt, which terminated her long contest with Peter the Great, stripped her of her most valuable provinces and made Russia supreme in the Baltic. From that day Sweden was never the successful rival of

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[1] Ewart to Leeds (Prussian Despatches, Record Office), 10. 17 Oct. 1789.

[2] Whitworth to Leeds (Russian Despatches, Record Office), Feb. 12, 1790.

Russia. She was sometimes little more than her obsequious vassal. In 1743 another disastrous war was terminated by another humiliating peace, and Russia had gradually overcome the influence of France and acquired a dominating authority over the poor and numerous nobles who chiefly directed the government of the country. The royal authority, after the death of Charles XII., had fallen into extreme debility; but at last, in Gustavus III., the young nephew of Frederick the Great, the Swedes obtained a sovereign boundless in his ambition and his courage, and with extraordinary powers both of popular eloquence and of intrigue. Relying largely on the support and subsidies of France, but constituting himself at the same time the special representative and champion of the democracy of Sweden, he accomplished, in 1772, one of the most daring and successful revolutions of the eighteenth century. The army, with the exception of a few officers, readily followed him; the populace, who detested the corrupt aristocracy, and who were electrified by the eloquence of the King, welcomed the change with enthusiasm. The senators were arrested in their chamber. Stockholm was placed under martial law. The Diet, meeting in a hall surrounded by soldiers and commanded by cannon, gave its sanction to a new Constitution produced by the King, which swept away the old oligarchical ascendency and greatly strengthened the royal authority, and the whole change was effected within three days, without the effusion of a drop of blood, and with the manifest approval of the great body of the nation.[1]

[1] A graphic account of this *coup d'état* will be found in Geffroy, *Gustave III. et la Cour de France*. See, too, La Croix, *Constitutions de l'Europe*. Voltaire addressed a congratulatory epistle to Gustavus, in which he says:

Jeune et digne héritier du grand nom de Gustave,
Sauveur d'un peuple libre et roi d'un peuple brave.

This revolution broke the influence of Russia in the internal affairs of Sweden, and in the Russo-Turkish war Gustavus saw a chance of regaining some of her lost provinces. He armed rapidly by land and sea; he made a secret treaty with the Turks, by which he agreed to draw the sword in consideration of a Turkish subsidy, and in the summer of 1788, after short and angry preliminaries, Russia and Sweden were at war. In June a large but very ill-equipped Swedish army, under the command of the King, passed the frontier of Swedish Finland, captured Nyslot and besieged Fredrickshamn, while on sea two Russian ships of war were taken, and a formidable fleet threatened St. Petersburg.

The attack furnished a powerful diversion in favour of the Turks, and it appears to have been strangely unexpected. Though rumours of Swedish armaments had occasionally arrived at St. Petersburg,[1] no serious apprehension seems to have been felt till the Swedish army was on the eve of marching. Russia was making preparations for a great naval expedition to the Mediterranean; she had officially informed Sweden of her intention, and Finland was so slightly defended that at the outbreak of the war there was a serious question of detaching 15,000 men from the army of Potemkin, and sending them through the whole length of the empire to defend it. To those, indeed, who did not fully understand the character of the Swedish King, an attack seemed very improbable. Russia was by far the stronger Power; she had given no kind of provoca-

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Tu viens d'exécuter tout ce qu'on a prévu:
Gustave a triomphé sitôt qu'il a paru,
On t'admire aujourd'hui, cher prince, autant qu'on t'aime,
Tu viens de ressaisir les droits du diadème.

[1] Fraser to Carmarthen, April 11, June 10, 27, July 8, 1788.

tion; Sweden had no ally except the Turks; she was still torn by the dissensions produced by the revolution of 1772; her exchequer was almost empty, and, chiefly through the extravagance of the Court, and the King's extreme passion for operas and plays, a great debt had been contracted. The army consisted mainly of militia, with little discipline and few efficient officers;[1] and an article of the Constitution which had been so recently adopted expressly forbade the King, except in case of invasion, from engaging in war without the formal sanction of the Diet.

For a time, however, the uneasiness was very great, and there was some panic in the Russian capital. The Russian navy had of late years been greatly strengthened, and it contained several able foreign officers. Elphinstone, Greig, and Dugdale, who were all English or Scotch, had borne a very prominent part in the defeat of the Turkish fleet in the Mediterranean in 1770. The famous corsair, Paul Jones, had been introduced into the Russian service by Ségur, and he was employed on the Black Sea in the summer of 1788, but in the following year he committed a disgraceful offence and was obliged to fly from Russia.[2] Greig, who had now become an admiral, and who was an officer of great ability, commanded the Russian fleet in the Gulf of Finland, and he prepared promptly to encounter the Swedes. The intended expedition to the Mediterranean was at once abandoned; a most obstinately contested naval battle was fought for several hours with no decisive result; but the Russians, who had the advantage of being nearer to their naval arsenals, quickly re-

[1] See *An Account of late Transactions in Sweden*, sent by Keene to England, Oct. 1788.

[2] Fraser to Carmarthen, July 8, 1788. Whitworth to Carmarthen, April 24, 1789. Shelburne's *Life of Paul Jones*.

equipped, augmented their shattered fleet, and succeeded in shutting up the Swedes in the harbour of Sweaborg.

Nearly at the same time, the operations in Finland were totally paralysed by the mutiny of the Swedish officers, who belonged to the noble class. They had been brought to Finland, they said, on the pretence that the Russians were preparing to attack the Swedish territory, and they were quite ready to sacrifice their lives to defend that territory from invasion. They saw, however, with their own eyes that the representations of the King were absolutely false—that no Russian troops had been collected; that there were no signs of Russian hostility to Sweden; that they were expected to engage in an offensive war, contrary to the plain letter of the Constitution to which they had sworn. The mutiny began with a few men, but it soon spread through almost the whole body of the officers, and it was evident that without their assistance nothing could be done. They compelled the King to withdraw his army within his own frontiers, and they actually sent a deputation to St. Petersburg to make a truce, preparatory to a peace. The Empress, who had probably promoted the mutiny, received them very favourably, and an armistice was actually signed.

The ambitious scheme of Gustavus was thus suddenly blighted. The shock was so great that when he first heard of the mutiny he fell into a fit and lay for some time unconscious.[1] He soon, however, recovered and formed his resolutions. Abandoning his Finland army to the care of his brother, he returned hastily by a circuitous route to Sweden, where another and a most formidable danger had arisen.

This danger sprang from Denmark. There had

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[1] Keene to Fraser, Aug. 29, 1788.

been for generations a bitter national animosity between the Danes and the Swedes, which more than sixty years of peace had not allayed, and the disaffection of Norway, which then belonged to Denmark, and which was believed to be coveted by Sweden, kept the wound open. Russia and Denmark, on the other hand, were close allies. By the politic generosity of Russia, Denmark had obtained on very easy terms the important provinces of Schleswig and Holstein; and she had in her turn bound herself to furnish an auxiliary force whenever Russia was attacked in the North. Gustavus III. had, however, laboured, as he hoped with success, to sever the alliance, and to acquire a complete influence over his nephew the young Prince Royal, who governed Denmark, as the King was out of his mind. He had represented to him the dangers arising from the growing power and the equally growing ambition of Russia, and the identity of interests that should bind the two Scandinavian nations, and he imagined that he had at least secured the neutrality of Denmark. He soon found that he was mistaken. The Danish Prince determined to fulfil his treaty obligations, and in September 1788 a large Danish army, under the command of Prince Charles of Hesse Cassel, invaded Sweden from Norway. The King appealed to his people to rise against the invaders, and the appeal was at once responded to, but nearly the whole Swedish army was in Finland. It was utterly impossible to organise in time a force that could cope with any chance of success with the Danes; and the position was so desperate that it seemed as if the last vestige of Swedish independence must have perished.

It was at this point that England appeared upon the scene, and an obscure and difficult, but very important, period of English foreign policy begins. In order to understand it clearly, it will be necessary to

revert for a moment to events which have been described in the last chapter.[1]

We have seen that the policy of Joseph II., in abolishing the divided sovereignty which the Barrier Treaty had established in the Belgic provinces, in beginning a course of open hostilities against Holland, and in endeavouring to exchange his Flemish dominions for Bavaria, which would have given Austria an overwhelming power in Germany and would have been accompanied by the cession of Luxembourg and Namur to France, had excited the gravest alarm in both England, Holland, and Prussia, and had drawn those three Powers closely together. The troubles, almost amounting to civil war, which distracted Holland in 1785 and the two following years, and the successful interposition of Prussia and England in favour of the House of Orange, strengthened the connection, and led to the Triple Alliance which was signed in the summer of 1788. This treaty bound the three contracting Powers to an unalterable defensive alliance for 'preserving the public tranquillity and security, for maintaining their common interests, and for their mutual defence and guaranty against every hostile attack;' and it stipulated with much detail the assistance which each was to furnish to the other. The first great task which the allies undertook was the pacification of Europe in such a manner as to leave substantially unchanged the existing balance of power.

The phrase 'the balance of power' is one which has now fallen into great disfavour, and it is certain that in many periods of history it has been grossly abused. The belief that no State should be suffered to add anything to its territory without a corresponding adjustment of the frontier of its neighbours, or even of distant States, has done much more to subvert than to promote

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[1] Vol. v. pp. 354–364.

the security of Europe; and it has produced far more warfare than it has prevented. Political prescience is at best so limited and imperfect a thing, that it is rarely wise to encounter the certain evils of a European war in order to avert dangers that are distant, doubtful, and obscure; and unforeseen influences of dissolution or of adjustment continually neutralise the effects of the most formidable political combinations. At the same time, within certain limits the wisdom of maintaining a balance of power is self-evident. Europe is a confraternity of nations, in which no one can completely isolate itself from the others. It is possible that one European State may (as in the period of Roman greatness) attain such an inordinate supremacy that all others may be at its mercy; and if the ascendencies of Charles V., Lewis XIV., and Napoleon had been consolidated when at their height, this would most probably have occurred. It is possible for a similar power to be attained by an alliance or coalition of two or more States, and it is also possible that there may be a local disturbance of the balance, which places certain quarters of Europe entirely under a single influence, to the great injury of other nations. In addition to the evils which inevitably follow from the existence of a European war, there was, at the time I am writing of, much probability of a partition of territory, which, in both the East and the North, would profoundly alter the relative position of European nations. The Emperor and the Russian Empress were conspiring to partition the dominions of the Porte, while the Swedish provinces were in great danger of falling into the possession of Russia and Denmark.

The latter danger was the most pressing. Denmark was completely under Russian influence, and if the independence and power of Sweden were destroyed the Baltic would become little more than a Russian lake. To England and Holland this was a very serious com-

mercial question. To Prussia it was a question of security, for she had a long line of unprotected coast. With the Swedish army inactive in Finland; with the Swedish fleet beleaguered in Sweaborg; with a Danish army marching rapidly into Sweden, the position seemed nearly hopeless; and the capture of Gothenburg, which appeared certain and imminent, would have probably made it irremediable by placing the chief commercial town of Sweden in the hands of the Danes. But the intervention of the allies was prompt and decisive. Their mediation was offered to and accepted by the King of Sweden, and the Danes were informed that unless they at once desisted from their operations, and withdrew from the Swedish territory, a Prussian army would enter Holstein and an English fleet would appear in the Sound. The force which lay behind these threats was irresistible, and to the great disappointment of the Swedish King, who would have gladly continued the war with the assistance of such powerful allies, and whose conduct at this critical moment was evidently designed to rekindle the contest,[1] an armistice was signed between Sweden and Denmark in October 1788. It was prolonged by successive extensions till the definite peace, and the Danish army retired beyond the frontier.

The conduct of Hugh Elliot, the English minister at Copenhagen, who was chiefly employed in conducting this difficult business, received and deserved much praise, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the very existence of Sweden as an independent Power was probably due to the rapid and decisive intervention of the allies. The supposition that Gustavus in first declaring war had been prompted by them[2] is, I believe,

[1] See Lady Minto's *Life of Hugh Elliot.*

[2] This was asserted by Geffroy in his *Gustave III. et la Cour*

entirely untrue. Their intervention was mainly due to an anxiety to maintain the political balance in the Baltic, and partly, perhaps, to the fact that France, which had always tried to maintain a kind of protectorate over Sweden, had already offered her mediation.[1] Russia, not unnaturally, bitterly resented it. There had already been many complaints at St. Petersburg of an order which had been issued in England forbidding the hire of English transports to carry Russian troops from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, and of English pilots to guide the Russian fleet, and it was acknowledged that military stores had been occasionally sent by English merchants to Constantinople. The English Government replied that the former measure was essential to their neutrality, and that it was impossible to prevent private merchants sending their stores to an advantageous market. Russia had in fact profited largely by this very trade, and more than one English ship laden with military stores had discharged its cargo at Cronstadt.[2] It was added, as a proof that England did not lean unduly to the Turks, that the Emperor of Morocco had actually declared war against her on the pretence that she was assisting the Russians.[3] The proceedings relating to Sweden caused a much more serious alienation. Count Ostermann, the Russian Vice-

de France, ii. 65, 66, and it has been often repeated. The confidential correspondence, however, of Keene, who was English consul at Stockholm when the war broke out (Swedish Correspondence, Record Office), and the letters in the Russian Correspondence from Fraser to Carmarthen, Aug. 29, and from Carmarthen to Fraser, Aug. 29, 1788, seem to me to show clearly that the allies had nothing whatever to say to the conduct of Gustavus in declaring war, and that they did not approve of it.

[1] Keene to Carmarthen, Sept. 26; Fraser to Carmarthen, Oct. 10, 1788.

[2] Carmarthen to Fraser, Feb. 1788; Carmarthen to Woronzow, March 29, 1788; Fraser to Carmarthen, June 3, 1788. *Annual Register*.

[3] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 209; Carmarthen to Fraser, April 29, 1788.

Chancellor, complained in strong terms, both through the Russian minister in London and through the English minister at St. Petersburg, of the unfriendly conduct of England and Prussia. He dwelt upon the unprovoked aggression of the King of Sweden; upon the palpable falseness of the pretexts he had advanced; upon the necessity of at least taking measures to prevent a recurrence of such attacks. The proposed mediation was courteously but firmly declined.[1] The Empress would not make peace on the terms of the *status quo*, or on any terms that were dictated by other Powers. For the present, however, her energies were mainly directed to the Turkish war, and for some months an unquiet peace reigned in the Baltic.

As Russia refused to accept the mediation of the allies, their next attempt was to negotiate a separate peace between the Emperor and the Turks. It was the ambition of the Emperor which had first drawn England and Prussia into connection, and it was soon found that the task of effecting a peace was greatly aggravated by the at least equal ambition of the King of Prussia. It was only gradually that the full extent and significance of the Prussian designs were disclosed, and they threatened to change the whole aspect of the war.

At the end of January 1789, Ewart, the English representative at Berlin, wrote to Lord Carmarthen an account of instructions which had been sent to Alvensleben, the Prussian minister at the Hague, and which had been communicated to him by order of the King of Prussia. The Prussian minister was instructed to act in close harmony with the ministers of Great Britain and Holland, and at the same time he received a sketch of the wishes and plans of his Court. The first task of

[1] Ostermann to Woronzow, Oct. 13; Whitworth to Carmarthen Dec. 20, 1788.

the allies had been to save Sweden from being overpowered by the Danish invasion, and thus to preserve the balance of the Baltic. So far this task had been achieved. The Danes had retired from Swedish territory and had signed an armistice, and the conduct of the Court of St. Petersburg in dispensing with Danish assistance by land seemed to indicate more moderate views. The neutrality of Denmark, however, must be clearly and definitely established, and if there was any refusal to admit it, on the part either of Russia or of Denmark, it might be necessary for Great Britain and Holland to threaten to send a fleet to the Baltic. With regard to Sweden, the object should be to restore peace on the same footing as before the war began. The King of Sweden is much to be blamed for his instability, and England and Prussia must endeavour to establish a permanent interest at Stockholm. In dealing with Russia, they must also very closely co-operate, and the King of Prussia earnestly hoped that Poland, where Prussian influence now preponderated, might be included in the negotiations. It was not, however, his desire that the war between Russia and Turkey should be at once terminated. On the contrary, it ought to be made a main object to prevent the Turks from making 'a precipitate peace without the concurrent intervention of the two Courts.' The Russians and Turks ought to be left to themselves, unless the Turks should be overpowered; but the Russians ought if possible to be prevented from sending a fleet to the Mediterranean. Once, however, the mediation of the two Courts was accepted by the Porte, 'our influence so established might afterwards be employed in the manner best suited to the circumstances and to our common interests. The guarantees of the remaining possessions of the Turks after the conclusion of the peace, and their subsequent accession to our defensive alliance, continue likewise to

be considered as probable consequences, and at least the Porte may be encouraged to expect those advantages, provided it relies solely on the mediation of England and Prussia.' The King of Prussia will be obliged to resist all attempts of the Emperor to make acquisitions of territory; but this significant qualifying clause is added—'He trusts England will concur in approving this resolution, or in contributing to make such an arrangement as may procure a compensation.' 'In all probability,' it is added, 'Great Britain and the King of Prussia will have it in their power to settle both the succession of Poland and the election of the King of the Romans, in the manner best suited to promote their common interests.'

It was already evident that the Prussian views extended much beyond a simple and speedy re-establishment of peace, and it was added that a military demonstration of Prussia and a naval demonstration of England and Holland would probably be needed. It was not likely, the Prussian ministers thought, that the actual employment of force would become necessary, for the two Imperial Courts were much exhausted, but the appearance of force might be very useful. 'The line of conduct,' continued Ewart, 'pursued towards France, in the affairs of Holland, is adduced as a recent and striking proof in support of this conclusion and of the great probability of such an attempt being completely successful, since the risks would be much smaller than in the case alluded to.'[1]

In the course of the spring and summer of 1789 the Prussian designs took a more definite shape. The King of Prussia believed himself to be in possession of overwhelming military power; he was extremely desirous to renew the long contest with Austria which

[1] Ewart to Carmarthen, Jan. 28, 1789.

had been carried on by Frederick the Great, and he was determined to avail himself of the present war to obtain special advantages for Prussia. He had two great objects in view. One was to compel Austria to relinquish, in favour of Poland, Galicia and its other possessions in that country which, the Prussian ministers said, 'from their situation are so extremely embarrassing to Prussia.'[1] The other was to obtain from Poland, as a compensation for this cession, the important towns of Dantzig and Thorn, both of which, but especially the former, seemed from their position to belong naturally to Eastern Prussia.[2] In order that these objects should be attained, it was the strong wish of the King 'to see the two Imperial Courts, and particularly the Emperor, embarked in a second campaign with the Porte,'[3] and he himself resolved to make a demonstration on the frontiers of Galicia and Bohemia. 'It is not possible,' wrote Ewart, 'for his Imperial Majesty to assemble an army of 50,000 men at present in these provinces, whereas the King of Prussia has actually 200,000 men, in the very best order and discipline, ready to take the field.'[4] Galicia was ripe for revolt. Hitherto, the King of Prussia said, he had discouraged insurrectionary movements, but they would probably break out without his concurrence as a consequence of the revolt in the Austrian Netherlands, and they would also probably be directed and assisted by the Polish States. In this case the Emperor would hardly be able to subjugate this detached portion of his dominions. Poland would become a party to the war, and Prussia would be bound to support her.[5]

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[1] Ewart to Leeds, May 28, 1789. Carmarthen had just inherited the title of Duke of Leeds.

[2] Hertzberg, *Recueil des Mémoires &c.* iii. 13–16.

[3] Ewart to Carmarthen, Feb. 11, 1789.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ewart to Leeds, Aug. 10, 1789.

But this was not all. The very grave resolution was now taken at Berlin of offering under certain circumstances direct assistance to the Turks. The Sultan had died in the spring of this year; his successor was determined to carry on the war with energy, and the Prussian minister at Constantinople was now directed to negotiate an alliance with him on the following terms. If victorious, the Turks were to consider the interests of Poland, Sweden, and especially Prussia; but if fortune declared against them, and they were driven beyond the Danube, the King of Prussia engaged to assist the Porte with his whole force until the Porte regained 'all his ancient provinces, situated beyond the Danube and the Cuban, as well as the greatest possible security for Constantinople on the side of the Black Sea.' If, however, the Ottoman Court was ultimately obliged to make cessions to that of Vienna, the Prussian minister was enjoined to stipulate that this should only be on the express condition 'that the Court of Austria should be obliged to restore to the Republic of Poland, in exchange, Galicia and all the provinces which, by the treaty of partition, she had secured from Poland; and that the Courts of Vienna, of St. Petersburg, and of Poland should arrange at the same time with the King of Prussia about their respective differences and interests in a manner conforming to the interests of the King of Prussia, as the principal friend and ally of the Porte.'[1]

This very serious step was taken by Prussia without any concert with her allies. It was, however, at once frankly communicated to the English minister, and the Prussians distinctly stated that they did not consider that it in any way bound or implicated England and Holland under the terms of the Triple Alliance. They

[1] Ewart to Leeds, May 28, 1789. See, too, the inclosed instructions (May 26) to Dietz, the Prussian minister at Constantinople.

added, at the same time, that one result of the Prussian policy would probably be that Turkey would become a party to the defensive alliance under a guarantee of her dominions.

Even this, however, was not the full extent of the Prussian designs. For some time affairs in the Austrian Netherlands had been becoming rapidly worse. The disturbances which had been originally produced by the rash, and for the most part wholly unjustifiable, encroachments of Joseph upon the ancient privileges and customs of his Flemish subjects had been composed at the close of 1787; but after a short interval they revived with redoubled violence. An obscure quarrel, which has long since lost its interest, about the constitution of the University of Louvain, was the immediate cause, and after many acts of violence, disorder, and military repression, a serious insurrection broke out. The revolutionary ideas that were seething in France were in full vigour in Austrian Flanders; an insurrection in the neighbouring bishopric of Liége still further strengthened them, and the Flemish insurgents were so successful, that by the end of 1789 the Austrian garrison was completely driven out of Flanders, the dominion of the Emperor was thrown off, and in January 1790 an Act of Union of the Belgian United Provinces was drawn up and signed at Brussels.

For some time before this triumph had been achieved the separation of these provinces from the Empire seemed a probable contingency, and it soon appeared that, provided they did not fall into the hands of France, Prussia was prepared both to welcome and to accelerate it. If Austria could be deprived on one side of her Polish, and on the other side of her Flemish, dominions, while Prussia obtained Dantzig and Thorn, it was plain that the relative position of the two great German Powers would be materially changed; and it was in-

sinuated to the English minister that a Prussia so aggrandised would give a much greater weight and importance to the Triple Alliance.[1]

It was reported in the April of 1789 that France was endeavouring to negotiate an alliance with Russia, and that the Emperor strongly supported her; and there were rumours and suspicions at Berlin that the cession of the Austrian Netherlands to France might form part of the arrangement.[2] Under these circumstances the Prussian Government represented confidentially to England that the three Powers should form some plan of concert about the affairs of the Netherlands. It was generally admitted that the acquisition of these provinces by France must be resisted at the cost of war; and the Prussians urged that, in the not improbable contingency of the French entering Flanders as the allies of the Emperor, the three allied Powers should actively support the insurgents in resisting them. But there was another contingency to be feared. Was it not probable that if the allies now refused to support them, the insurgents might throw themselves into the arms of France. and that a French alliance, or protectorate, or annexation might be the result? On the whole, the Prussians suggested that the best settlement of the question might be the union of Austrian Flanders and Holland into a single republic. This must, however, be left to the determination of the people and to discussion with Holland. All that was at present urged was that the exising system seemed likely to be overthrown, and that the common interests of the allies would suffer extremely if Austrian Flanders were 'annexed to France, of which there seems to be so much danger, as a considerable party in the country is already inclined to

[1] Ewart to Leeds, Aug. 10, 1789.

[2] Ibid., April 20, May 16, 1789.

adopt this measure, and their French neighbours use every means to encourage it.' England and Holland, in the opinion of the Prussian King, ought at once to consult together about the possibility of carrying out such an union of the Low Countries as was suggested. By the Peace of Utrecht and the Barrier Treaty they were expressly authorised to prevent Austrian Flanders from falling into the hands of France, and Prussia had also a right to interfere as a party to the Peace of Utrecht, and as a member of the German Empire 'to which the Austrian Netherlands belonged from their origin.'[1]

These considerations opened to the English Government a long vista of dangerous and embarrassing complications. The two objects of England in interfering with the existing war had been to bring about as speedily as possible a European peace on the basis of the *status quo* as it existed before the war, and to induce as many Powers as possible to join in a defensive alliance which might for the future secure the peace of Europe from aggressive enterprises. The Prussian alliance was the very keystone to this defensive system, and the King of Prussia had signally displayed his good-will to England by consenting that a war in the East Indies in which any European Power attacked the English possessions should be esteemed a *casus fœderis*.[2] In conjunction with Prussia, England had already in some degree committed herself to the task of restricting, with a view to ultimately extinguishing, the present war. But the policy which the Prussian ministers had announced was almost certain both to prolong and to extend it, by suggesting new objects of contention which could hardly be settled except by arms, and which might very easily

[1] Ewart to Leeds, May 16, August 10, 1789.

[2] Smyth's *Memoirs of Sir Robert Keith*, ii. 225.

draw every important country in Europe into the contest. It was in the highest degree improbable that Austria could be induced to abandon her Polish dominions, unless she were conquered by a Prussian army; and it was very probable that a war with France would be the consequence of any attempt to alter the political position of the Austrian Netherlands. The original object of the Triple Alliance had been to maintain and consolidate the peace of Europe, and it was with this object that England and Holland had joined in it. There was now, however, an obvious desire on the part of Prussia to employ it with the object of remodelling the map of Europe at the great risk of an extended war, and in the interests of Prussian ambition. At the same time, it was difficult to draw back without seriously endangering or weakening the alliance.

Sir Robert Keith, who was English minister at Vienna when the war between the Emperor and Turkey began, has furnished us with an extraordinary illustration of the laxity and negligence with which English foreign politics were at this time sometimes directed. He mentions that the first intelligence he received of the impending alliance between England and Prussia, which so profoundly changed the attitude of England towards the Emperor, was derived not from his own Government, but from the Prussian minister; that at the time when this alliance and the entry of the Emperor into the Turkish war had made the relations of England to the Court of Vienna peculiarly delicate, critical, and difficult, he was left for five whole months without a single line of instruction on public affairs, and that no less than fifty-two successive despatches which he had written remained unanswered. On an average, he said, he obtained one answer to about forty despatches.[1] On very grave occasions, however, Pitt

[1] Smyth's *Memoirs of Sir R. Keith*, ii. 219, 221, 225–232.

appears to have himself intervened in foreign politics,[1] and his hand may, I think, be traced in the admirably reasoned, courteous, but at the same time somewhat sarcastic despatches in which the English Government now dissected the Prussian proposals and indicated their own policy.

The first of these despatches relates exclusively to the Polish and Turkish questions. It expresses warm appreciation of the courtesy of the King of Prussia in communicating the instructions to the Prussian minister at Constantinople to the English minister, and also of his care not to implicate England and Holland in his policy. The chief object, the writer continues, of Prussian policy appears now to be, first of all, to deprive the Empire of those provinces which Austria acquired by her share in the partition of Poland; and, secondly, 'the acquisition of some considerable place, such as Dantzig and Thorn, with their adjacent territory, in the more northern parts of Poland. Other arrangements beneficial to Prussia may be in contemplation, but I state these as the most essential objects in the present system of acquisition of that Power.'

It seemed to the English Government highly improbable that the Porte could secure these ends, or that she would secure them if it were in her power. It can hardly be reasonably supposed that the Ottoman arms could be so successful 'as to render the Porte equal to the task of not only making terms for herself and Sweden, but likewise of settling the affairs of the four remaining Powers to the satisfaction of Prussia and Poland;' and it is almost equally improbable that, in case of a serious defeat, she would be able to carry out the Prussian design of making any cession of territory she was obliged to make to Austria conditional on that

[1] See vol. v. p. 290.

Power restoring Galicia and the other Polish provinces to Poland. The King of England would be delighted at any advantages that could be attained by Prussia 'without danger of extending those hostilities it is so much the interest of all Europe to put an end to.' It is, however, very plain that the intentions now disclosed go 'much beyond the spirit of our treaty of alliance, which is purely of a defensive nature, and by which we of course cannot be considered as in any degree bound to support a system of an offensive nature, the great end of which appears to be aggrandisement rather than security, and which from its very nature is liable to provoke fresh hostilities, instead of contributing to the restoration of general tranquillity.' The future guarantee of the Turkish dominions is a point which can only be practically and beneficially discussed at the peace. England has no wish to act in such a manner as to make a future connection with Russia impossible. She is persuaded that the Prussian policy would greatly diminish the chance of detaching Russia from Austria. 'In discussing these points,' the minister continues, 'and indeed upon every other occasion, I must beg you, sir, to remember that it is by no means the idea of his Majesty and of his confidential servants to risk the engaging this country in a war on account of Turkey, either directly or indirectly. I am to desire you would be particularly careful in your language to prevent any intention of that nature being imputed to us.'[1]

The same pacific counsels were reiterated in a despatch which was sent about three months later. England, Leeds said, fully admitted the pernicious consequences that would ensue if the Austrian Netherlands became absolutely dependent on France, and she

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[1] Leeds to Ewart, June 24, 1789.

was quite prepared to coöperate with Prussia and Holland in preventing it. But it was necessary that this danger should be clear and imminent. 'As yet,' said the English minister, 'nothing in these provinces appears to call for such a degree of interference on the part of the allied Powers as to threaten the interruption of that tranquillity which it is so much their interest, and I trust their intention, to preserve.' The Emperor is very dangerously ill, and his death would probably produce a change of system which might alter materially the problem in the Netherlands. 'The idea of separating Galicia from the Emperor is certainly one which is in all respects tempting to the Court of Berlin, and in proportion as it would add to the security and strength of that Court, it would certainly be considered here as beneficial to our general system. But the advantage might be purchased at too dear a rate. It would be so if the attempt led to involve the allies, or any of them, in a war. For the station they hold at present, and the benefits to be derived from a continuance of peace, seem likely to contribute more to the real prosperity of their dominions than the most brilliant successes which could be expected to attend their arms. These considerations make it appear wiser that the King of Prussia should avoid taking any such part in the events which may arise in Galicia as may lead to a rupture with the Emperor. . . . On the whole, therefore, it is his Majesty's earnest wish to prevail on the Court of Berlin to desist altogether from any enterprise in the Netherlands or in Galicia, and at all events it is impossible to pledge this country beforehand to the consequences of measures which go beyond the line of a defensive alliance, and which might incur, without any sufficient justification, the risk of a general war.' 'When the independence of Sweden seemed in danger of being immediately and totally subverted, there appeared to be an evident and

urgent interest which called for the effectual interposition of the allies. But it does not in the present situation of things appear likely that any event should arise in the war between the two Imperial Courts and Turkey which can be considered as calling upon the allies in the same manner, or which can properly induce them to become parties in the war.' [1]

The campaign of 1789 was on the whole very disastrous to the Turks. In addition to several less important fortresses, Belgrade was at last taken, after a long siege, by the Austrians, and Bender by the Russians, and some very considerable battles were fought. The Russian forces moved triumphantly through Moldavia; while the Austrians took possession of Bucharest, the capital of Wallachia; overran the greater part of Servia, and captured most of its fortresses, though they at length received a check at Orsova. These successes, combined with the rapidly extending insurrection in Austrian Flanders, were watched very keenly at Berlin, and a few extracts from the letters of Ewart to the English Government will show how near Europe was to a great and general war at the close of 1789 and in the first months of 1790.

In October he reminded the Duke of Leeds that in the event of the Turks being in danger of being pushed beyond the Danube, the Prussian minister at Constantinople was authorised to offer them effectual support, and that this would become almost inevitable if Belgrade and Bender fell. 'On the other hand,' he continued, 'positive advices have been received by this Court that the Emperor has again represented strongly to the Empress of Russia the necessity of making peace, proposing, at all events, that Oczakow, Belgrade, and

[1] Leeds to Ewart, Sept. 14, 1789.

Bender should be restored to the Porte, on condition of the fortifications of the two former being razed; that he would keep Chotzim, a district in Wallachia, and another in Bosnia, and that the Turks should reimburse to both the Imperial Courts all the expenses of the war. But, however moderate these terms may appear to the Emperor, this Court is persuaded they will not be accepted by the Porte.'[1]

The English advice, which had been already given, was received very courteously by the King of Prussia. For the present, he fully agreed, nothing short of a French interference in the affairs of the Austrian Netherlands would require the interposition of the allies; he promised not to make any enterprise either in Galicia or the Netherlands without English advice, but he represented that it was already extremely difficult to prevent the inhabitants of Galicia from revolting, although the leading patriots in Poland had been exhorted to use their influence in the cause of peace. If, however, Poland were committed with Austria, if the Emperor made acquisitions dangerous to Prussia, especially if he took possession of Moldavia and Wallachia, Prussia would be obliged to intervene. For the present the King said he had no such intention. Russia was strongly opposed to the Emperor obtaining Moldavia and Wallachia, and the two Courts, but especially Austria, were so impoverished that if the war continued in the following year a favourable crisis would probably arise. If the King engaged in the war he would only ask of his allies to maintain the neutrality of France and Spain.[2]

In November and December the prospect darkened. Count Horn had arrived at Berlin on a mission from the States of Brabant, and the Prussian minister now

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[1] Ewart to Leeds, Oct. 1, 1789. [2] Ibid. Oct. 6, 10 17, 1789.

maintained that if the insurgents prevailed so completely as to have a decisive majority, the allies ought to recognise their independence, in order to prevent their possible union with the French provinces of Flanders. The King was exceedingly elated with the success of the insurgents, and Ewart was now convinced beyond all doubt that he hoped to deprive Austria both of the Netherlands and Galicia, and that an insurrection in Galicia would speedily break out, stimulated by the success of the revolt in Brabant. In Bohemia and Hungary discontent was spreading. Prussia would obtain Dantzig and Thorn when Poland got back Galicia; the King contemplated an immediate alliance with Poland and Turkey, and he was much alienated from England, on the supposition that she was opposed to the severance of Galicia and the Netherlands from the empire. 'His Prussian Majesty continues much occupied with the idea of taking advantage of the present favourable conjuncture to diminish the power of his rival as much as possible, but his ministers hope they have succeeded in convincing his Majesty that he can do nothing with regard to the Netherlands without the concurrence of his allies.' He is, however, strongly in favour of the independence of the Austrian Netherlands; he thinks it unavoidable, and is delighted to hear that the Dutch Pensionary is not against it. The allies, in his opinion, ought at once authoritatively to interpose to prevent either France from interfering, or the Emperor himself from sending troops into the Netherlands.[1]

This policy evidently meant an immediate war. Leeds wrote briefly in reply, urging delay. The British Government agreed with Prussia, that the insurrection in the Austrian Netherlands seemed likely to produce

[1] Ewart to Leeds, Nov. 7, 28, Dec. 1, 7, 22, 31, 1789.

their total separation from their present sovereign, and, of course, establishing a new, separate, and independent Power amongst the States of Europe.' As, however, an armistice had been established between the contending Powers in the Netherlands, there seemed for the present nothing to be done. Leeds earnestly hoped that England, Prussia, and Holland might remain closely united on the question; he expressed without disguise his own opinion, that the best solution would be a reconciliation of the Netherlands with the Emperor, coupled with a full acknowledgment of their ancient privileges; and he strongly represented that the questions relating to the Netherlands and the questions relating to Galicia were completely distinct, and that it would be very unwise to connect them.[1]

Prussia at this time took a decisive lead, and in January 1790 the Prussian minister proposed that the two Imperial Courts should be summoned to make an immediate peace at the mediation and under the guarantee of England, Holland, and Prussia, on the condition that all the conquests from the Porte should be restored. While making these propositions the King was determined to assemble two armies, one on the frontiers of Galicia, the other in Livonia, and to make a diversion on the side of Galicia, while the Turks directed their principal efforts towards Croatia and Styria on the one side and the Crimea on the other. As the price of this active assistance the Porte was to be asked to agree not to make any peace which did not include Prussia, and secure for Prussia such advantages as the circumstances admitted, particularly the restoration of Galicia to Poland.[2]

The answer of Leeds disclaimed emphatically on the part of England and Holland any responsibility for

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[1] Leeds to Ewart, Dec. 8, 14, 1789. [2] Ewart to Leeds, Jan. 26, 1790.

such a policy. 'The measures which his Prussian Majesty seems determined to adopt, with a view to force the two Imperial Courts to make peace with the Porte upon moderate terms, not having been adopted in consequence of any concert between the allies, cannot with justice be ascribed to the councils either of Great Britain or Holland; and whatever the consequences of so very active an interference may be, our system of defensive alliance cannot fairly be responsible for it.' At the same time Ewart was instructed to make no useless complaints. The flourishing condition of the finances and of the army of Prussia makes her success very probable, and England will hope for it, but it is very possible that the war may be extended rather than terminated by her policy. The immediate recognition of the independence of the Belgic provinces seemed to the English ministers very unwise. They may become independent, but it is important not to precipitate matters; and there is much reason to fear that when severed from the Austrian rule they may become wholly subservient to France.[1]

For a few weeks there appears to have been a pause in active diplomacy. Ewart wrote that the King was now almost certain to acknowledge the independence of the Belgic states and to intervene in favour of Turkey; that the proposed alliance with Turkey was actually drawn up, and that the relations with Poland were becoming closer.[2] Some time before, Prussia had proposed that each of the allies should lend a small sum to the King of Sweden in order that he should be enabled to continue his struggle.[3]

The Prussian ministers determined to make one more effort to obtain the co-operation of the two allies, and if this object could be attained, they professed

[1] Leeds to Ewart, Feb. 9, 1790.

[2] Ewart to Leeds, Feb. 11, 1790.

[3] Ibid. Jan. 4, 1790.

themselves ready to sacrifice some part of their scheme of aggrandisement. Their proposal, however, was one which was hardly likely to be peacefully effected, and if it failed, England and Holland could not have refused, after accepting it, to draw the sword. It was sent by Ewart to England on February 25. The Prussian Government, he stated, had arrived definitely at the following conclusions:

1. It was indispensably necessary for the allies to assemble an army in the neighbourhood of the Netherlands in order to secure the direction of events, and especially the two great objects of preventing France from interfering with the Austrian Netherlands, and of preventing the Emperor from subduing them by force and abolishing their ancient privileges.

2. If this step were taken, the King of Prussia will then consent to Great Britain and Holland entering into a negotiation with the Court of Vienna for restoring the Netherlands, on the condition of that part of Galicia which lies at this side of the Krapack or Carpathian mountains being given back to Poland, and in that case Austria may likewise have the limits of the Peace of Passarowitz restored on the side of Turkey. By this last provision Austria would obtain Belgrade, and a portion of Servia and Wallachia which had been ceded by the peace of 1739. They were already by conquest in her hands, but Turkey was to be asked or compelled to surrender them formally at the peace, in order to facilitate the acquisition by Poland of the chief part of Galicia.

3. If the Emperor should refuse these conditions the Netherlands ought not to be restored. Prussia in this case will support England and Holland against any bad consequences that may arise from this refusal, while, on the other hand, if Prussia should be engaged in war with the two allied Imperial Courts, Great

Britain was expected to enforce the neutrality of France and Denmark, and to prevent any Russian fleet from attacking the Prussian coast.

4. If the Emperor refuses to negotiate on the above-mentioned conditions, the independence of the Belgic provinces must at once be acknowledged. The King of Prussia declared that he would even prefer to allow them to be dependent on France, rather than permit 'such an opportunity as the present to pass without taking advantage of it in diminishing the power of his dangerous rival.'[1]

The extreme seriousness of the situation disclosed in these despatches is very plain. Prussia evidently desired and was determined on war; and England, which had originally entered into the Triple Alliance for the purpose of maintaining the peace of Europe, was now almost driven to the alternative of breaking it up at a time of great European complication and danger, or of embarking in a very serious and extended struggle, of which the real object would be the aggrandisement of Prussia and Poland. The difficulty was especially great, because the fate of the Belgic provinces, which was now hanging in suspense, had always been esteemed a matter of capital importance in English foreign policy; while the question of the frontier of Turkey on the side of Austria, and of the frontier of Poland on the side of Prussia, lay almost wholly beyond the range of English interests. Before, however, the despatch which has just been quoted arrived in England, the English Government sent a long and very able despatch to Berlin, defining and defending the policy they had adopted. The draft of this despatch is corrected in the handwriting of Pitt, and I have little doubt that it was his composition.

[1] Ewart to Leeds, Feb. 25, 1790.

It began with a full discussion of the Prussian proposal for the immediate recognition of the independence of the Belgic provinces. Having reminded the Prussian minister that 'the object of the convention concluded by the allies on this subject was that no step should be taken in a point of so great importance but by common consent,' the writer proceeded to state that the leading men in Holland were strongly opposed to the Prussian proposal, and that the English ministers fully shared their view. They opposed immediate recognition because there was still such confusion and dissension in these provinces, that it was impossible to predict any permanence of government, constitution, or alliance, and because the whole state of affairs might be changed by the death of the Emperor, which appeared imminent. There were two dangers which the allies unanimously agreed must be guarded against. Europe, for great purposes of public order and security, had placed these provinces under the Austrian sceptre, but she had given the House of Austria only a limited, divided, and conditional authority over them; and that House must not be suffered to establish despotic authority in them, and to make an unrestrained use of their wealth and population. Under the present circumstances, however, this danger was exceedingly remote. It was also agreed that 'neither under the dominion of the House of Austria nor under any other circumstances should these provinces be allowed to become an accession to the power of France.' 'On this subject,' the despatch continued, 'it is to be observed that whatever may have been the intrigues or the promises of individuals, no public encouragement has been held out by France to the independence of the Netherlands; that the recent example of what has passed in that country must necessarily inspire the noblesse and clergy of the provinces with an apprehension of the danger to them

from the introduction of a French system, and that the present apparent and increasing weakness and distraction of that country must prevent any body of men from looking to that quarter for any present and effectual support. It is also a material circumstance that while the provinces feel their independence in danger from the possible attacks of the Emperor, they will be fearful of taking any measures which might be offensive to those Powers, by whom alone they can, under the present circumstances, be effectually protected against him; and it may even be doubted whether, if this fear were once removed, by the allies having decisively committed themselves on that important point, the intrigues of France would not have a better field to work in, by the French being enabled to avail themselves of those points of jealousy and difference which must be expected to arise.' All that seems necessary is to maintain a party attached to the allies, just as there is a party attached to France, and the allies have in this respect quite as good chances and means as the French. It is true that the Belgic provinces are for the present *de facto* independent; but there has as yet been no public declaration that the Emperor will not in the next season endeavour to regain his dominion in them.

It is said that, as guaranteeing Powers, we have a right to interpose. We undoubtedly have for the support of the ancient constitution, but not for the establishment of independence 'without having in some regular mode expressed our sense of the invasions of that constitution, and without having sufficient proof that no measures short of independence can prevent its subversion.' If we now recognise Belgic independence, we should act like France when she declared the independence of America. England treated that declaration as 'a direct and open avowal of hostilities,' and she could therefore not blame the Emperor if he re-

garded the recognition of Belgic independence as equivalent to a declaration of war. The English ministers earnestly hope that Prussia will not take this step, for England cannot concur in it.

Turning then to the other aspects of the question, the English Government fully agreed with Prussia that the object of the allies should be 'the establishment of a pacification on the grounds of the *status quo*,' and they were prepared to concur with Prussia and Holland in drawing up a memorial to that effect for the Courts of Sweden and Constantinople. 'If this representation should be unsuccessful, we would willingly comply with the King of Prussia's request by engaging to take measures to prevent his being attacked either by France or Denmark . . . considering such attack on these grounds as a *casus fœderis*. . . . If no such attack should take place, it is conceived that such demonstrations might be made by this country and by Holland as would materially assist the King of Prussia by the uncertainty and uneasiness which they would occasion to his enemies.' It must, however, be distinctly understood that 'the circumstances and interests of this country do not permit us to join in offensive operations to which we are not bound by treaty. This has already been clearly explained in several of the communications which have passed between the two Courts. But the circumstances of the present moment and the good faith which is due from this country require that, at a time when the King of Prussia appears to be on the eve of embarking on so extensive a plan of operations, he should again distinctly understand the degree of assistance which he may expect from this country.' Prussia then may expect the approbation of England in all efforts to make peace on the basis of the *status quo*. She may expect when pursuing this enterprise to be defended from attacks by France and Denmark; 'the necessity for enabling

Sweden to defend herself by another campaign against Russia, would also induce this country to take her share in such reasonable pecuniary aid as might be requisite for this purpose, and to exert herself for securing the neutrality of Denmark.' But hostilities against the Imperial Courts, either indirectly by recognising Belgic independence, or directly 'by our joining in the measures of offensive operations which Prussia may feel it her interest to adopt, would go beyond the line which this country has uniformly laid down.' If a peace on the basis of the *status quo* is made, England will be ready 'to include Turkey, Poland, and Sweden in the alliance, and to guarantee to them the terms of that pacification.'[1]

This despatch laid down the principles of English policy with a distinctness that left little to be desired. But almost immediately after it was written the whole aspect of affairs was changed by the news of the death of Joseph II. He had not yet completed his forty-ninth year, but the deadly illness which he had brought back from the Turkish frontier had never passed away, and those who were about him saw clearly how greatly disappointment and sorrow and anxiety had aggravated and accelerated its effects. A Turkish war raging; a war with Prussia and Poland manifestly impending; the Netherlands for the time completely lost; Hungary on the verge of revolt; bitter discontents and animosities revealing themselves in every part of his dominions—the dying Emperor saw but too plainly that his life had been one long failure, and that almost all his schemes had been abortive. The words that fell from him in his last days painted vividly his profound dejection. 'Your country,' he said to the Prince de Ligne, speaking of the Flemish revolt, 'has killed me.' 'God, who knows the heart, knows that in all I have done I have sought

[1] Leeds to Ewart, Feb. 26, 1790.

only the good of my people. May His will be done!' 'Here lies a sovereign who, with the best intentions, failed in everything he undertook.'

He had a strong craving for the affection of his subjects, and he had made it his aim to relieve the poor from serfdom and feudal burdens, to break the power of ecclesiastical tyranny and establish universal toleration throughout his dominions. Something of what he had done remained, and with a longer and more quiet reign much more might have been permanently accomplished, but as yet he had reaped little but hatred and insurrection. He spent his last days partly in rewarding his soldiers and his old servants, and partly in endeavouring to undo some of the measures which had proved most unsuccessful. The ancient constitution of Hungary was re-established. The Holy Crown of St. Stephen was sent back from Vienna and carried in triumph to Buda. Orders were issued to restore privileges which had been taken away in the Tyrol and in Galicia,[1] and proposals for a peace with Turkey were sent to England. His favourite generals, Lacy and Loudon, with a few other attached friends, gathered round the deathbed of the childless Emperor, but his brother and successor was absent, and his favourite niece, the Archduchess Elizabeth, to whom he was passionately attached, was now rapidly approaching her confinement. The anxiety with which she followed his sufferings produced a premature delivery, and on February 18 she died in childbirth. The blow was more than the Emperor could support. He bowed his head in an agony of grief, and two days later he was numbered with the dead.

[1] *Memoirs of Sir R. Keith*, ii. 251, 252; Coxe's *Hist. of the House of Austria*, vol. ii. There is a singularly beautiful and discriminating essay on the reign of Joseph, in Herman Merivale's *Historical Studies*, a book which is far less known than it deserves to be.

It is probably no exaggeration to say that his death saved Europe from a great extension of the war; for the animosities that had attached to him were such that a policy of conciliation in his hands would at this time have almost certainly failed. His brother Leopold, who succeeded to the title of King of Hungary, had already shown, as Grand Duke of Tuscany, great administrative ability, and he made it his first object to arrive at a peace. For several months, however, the prospect was exceedingly doubtful and menacing, and just before the death of Joseph, Prussia had fulfilled her threat, and taken a step which made a general war almost inevitable. At the end of January the Prussian minister at Constantinople had signed an offensive alliance between Prussia and Turkey. It declared that the enemies of the Turks in crossing the Danube had disturbed the balance of power; that the King of Prussia had determined to declare war in the following spring against Russia and Austria; and that he would not desist till the Porte had obtained a desirable peace and been placed in perfect security by sea and land; while the Turks, on their side, engaged to do all in their power to compel Austria to restore at the peace Galicia and her other Polish territory to Poland. If the Ottoman Court was successful, its intention was not to make peace till it had regained all its lost fortresses and territory, and especially the Crimea. The Prussian Court, recognising this intention, now bound itself not to make peace until Turkey did, and under any circumstances to guarantee to Turkey all the territory which was in her hands at the conclusion of the war; to endeavour to induce England, Holland, Sweden, Poland, and other Powers to join in the guarantee, and to enter into a close defensive alliance with Turkey. The Turks, on their side, promised to make no peace with the Austrians and Russians without including Prussia, Poland, and

Sweden, and under certain circumstances to support those Powers in the field.[1]

Such were the principal articles of this very important document—a document which was in the highest degree displeasing to the English ministers, and which greatly aggravated the seriousness of the situation. It was pretended, however, at Berlin that the Prussian minister at Constantinople had exceeded his instructions in making the treaty offensive, and for the present its ratification was withheld.

The Prussians at the same time strengthened their connection with Poland. Their first object was the acquisition of Dantzig and Thorn, and they accordingly proposed a treaty of commerce, by which these towns were to be given to them, as an equivalent for a considerable reduction of commercial duties. But it soon appeared that the proposal was exceedingly unpopular in Poland, and the treaty was rejected by the Diet.[2] A close treaty of alliance, however, between the two countries was concluded at Warsaw on March 29. Each State guaranteed the territories of the other, but it was agreed that this guarantee was not to prevent an amicable arrangement of some controversies relating to questions of frontier which had existed before the conclusion of the treaty. The contingents to be furnished by each State in case of attack were carefully regulated.[3]

The strong feeling which the proposed cession of Dantzig and Thorn excited in Poland threatened to throw considerable difficulties in the way of the Prussian projects of aggrandisement, while at the same time some very formidable dissensions which broke out between the aristocratic and the democratic parties in the newly

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[1] See for the text of this treaty, *Recueil des Mémoires &c. du Comte de Hertzberg*, iii. 37 42.

[2] Ibid. iii. 8–29.

[3] Ibid. iii. 1–8.

emancipated Belgic provinces, and the evident desire of the latter party to imitate and ally themselves with the French, alarmed the allies, and shook their confidence in the permanence of the new independence.[1] England and Holland, in opposition to Prussia, strongly favoured the reconciliation of these provinces with the Emperor, accompanied by an amnesty and a guarantee of their ancient constitution, and the more conciliatory dispositions of Leopold made this policy seem less hopeless. Leopold at the same time desired earnestly to terminate the Turkish war. He had never favoured it. He was sensible of the great dangers rising on the side of Prussia, and he desired the vote of the King of Prussia at the ensuing election for the position of King of the Romans, to which the dignity of Emperor was attached. Almost immediately after his accession he wrote to the King of Prussia in very amicable terms, asking his good offices, regretting the dissensions which had arisen between Austria and Prussia, disclaiming all views of aggrandisement, and stating that he would be content if, as a compensation for the expenses of the war, the limits of the Peace of Passarowitz were restored.[2]

He was at the same time quite aware of the dangers of a sudden attack from Prussia, and, carrying out a design of his brother, he withdrew a portion of his army from the Danube, and concentrated a powerful force under Loudon in Bohemia and Moravia.[3] As Russia was at this time expressing wishes for peace, as Sweden was ready to place her interests in the hands of the allies, and as the Turks were exhausted by successive

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[1] Ewart to Leeds, March 2, 8, 1790; Coxe's *Hist. of the House of Austria*, ii. 688–690.

[2] See the correspondence between the Kings of Hungary and Prussia, in Hertzberg, iii. 50–71.

[3] That this resolution had been taken just before the death of Joseph appears from a letter of Sir R. Keith (Keith's *Memoirs*, ii. 248).

defeats, there seemed much hope that if Prussia could be induced to pursue an unselfish policy, peace might be soon restored.

Such was at least the opinion of Ewart, who wrote that a negotiation might now soon be brought to a successful issue. Russia's 'increasing embarrassments would make her satisfied with Oczakow and its district.' The Porte might be induced to accept the limits of the Peace of Passarowitz, and there would be still less difficulty with Sweden.[1]

The King of Prussia accepted on the whole favourably the English despatch of February 26. He expressed his satisfaction at learning the exact limits of the assistance that might be expected from England, approved of the English proposal of a joint memorial in favour of the *status quo*,' and agreed to postpone the recognition of Belgic independence, and to join with England in furnishing some pecuniary aid to Sweden; but he still thought that an allied army should be assembled on the frontiers of the Low Country. Ewart adds, however, somewhat ominously: 'Should the King of Prussia be engaged in a war, by the refusal of the Courts of Vienna and St. Petersburg to make peace on the principle of the *status quo*, and should Galicia then be recovered by force of arms, some equivalent would be expected from Poland beyond the cession of Dantzig and Thorn. But even this would consist in an amicable arrangement of frontier of no great extent, and all idea of obtaining the Palatinates of Posen and Kalish has been abandoned, since it was decidedly preferred to have a preponderant influence in Poland, rather than entertain views of acquisition.'[2] The King had no objection to Great Britain taking the lead in endeavouring to effect a reconciliation in the Netherlands 'by re-esta-

[1] Ewart to Leeds, March 2, 1790. [2] Ibid. March 8, 1790.

blishing the ancient constitution and guarantee,' but he endeavoured to sow dissension between Russia and Austria by communicating to the Russians the plan of peace which Joseph a few days before his death had sent to London without consulting with St. Petersburg. He also endeavoured to ascertain whether the Courts of Vienna and St. Petersburg would negotiate jointly or separately, either on the basis of the *status quo* or on the basis of the cession of Galicia. For his own part he earnestly hoped that Galicia might be ceded in the manner that had been so often stated, and suggested that 'such an arrangement might be rendered more acceptable to the King of Hungary than the humiliating alternative of the *status quo* towards the Porte, especially as the fate of the Netherlands still remained uncertain.' At the urgent request of the English minister he still delayed the ratification to his treaty with Turkey.[1]

The English ministers saw clearly that Prussia had no real wish for peace, and that in this very critical moment a more decided policy must be pursued. Their first step was to send a confidential despatch to Berlin, representing that the King of Hungary 'appears sincerely desirous to conclude peace upon fair terms, having no object of ambition or aggrandisement in view;' that he had none of the leaning towards Russia, jealousy of Prussia, or dislike to English mediation that characterised his predecessor; and that in the opinion of the English Government 'a general pacification, or at least a separate one between Austria and the Porte (in case Russia still persists in her exorbitant pretensions),' may soon be concluded on the terms of 'the *status quo*, or nearly such.'[2] They soon after informed the Prussian

[1] Ewart to Leeds, March 8, 18, 27, 1790. See, too, the letter of the King of Prussia to Leopold, April 15, 1790, and the accompanying proposal for peace, Hertzberg, iii. 54-64.

[2] Leeds to Ewart, March 19, 1790.

ministers of the King's determination to bring matters to an issue by proposing, on his own authority, an armistice to each of the belligerent Powers in order to give time for negotiation. 'The basis of a negotiation,' writes the minister, 'ought of course to be the *status quo*, or as near that state as the circumstances of the several Powers will admit. At the same time his Majesty is ready to mediate a separate peace on this basis, and to press its immediate conclusion between any two of the belligerent Powers who may be ready to accede to it without waiting for the rest.' Keith was authorised to make this proposal at Vienna, and to state that if the King of Hungary accepted it; if he agreed in no case to attempt anything in the Netherlands contrary to the ancient constitution; and if he also admitted the renewal of the guarantees of the allied Powers in those provinces, England would enforce this proposal to the utmost at Constantinople. This step appeared to the King especially urgent on account of the use which the Prussian Government had thought fit to make of the secret proposal for peace made by the late Emperor a few days before his death. If it became known at Vienna that this most confidential Austrian communication to the allies had been betrayed to Russia, in order to sow dissension, a distrust and a resentment would be aroused which might easily be fatal to peace.

The English minister expressed his great gratification that the King had withheld his ratification from the treaty which had been signed at Constantinople, but he commented in a strain of grave and measured severity on the schemes of aggrandisement which Prussia had put forward. Ewart was directed to repeat to the Prussian ministers 'that the *status quo* appears to be the only fair and natural idea which can be proposed as the general basis of pacification. Such an idea, however, does not necessarily preclude any reasonable modifica-

tions of it, should any such come in question in the course of the negotiations. It will, however, be proper to state explicitly that at all events the idea of proposing sacrifices on the part of the Porte by re-establishing with Austria the Peace of Passarowitz, and by making cessions of some sort or other to Russia, on condition that Austria shall agree to relinquish Galicia, &c., seems totally inconsistent with the essential object (which every day renders more pressing) of re-establishing the general tranquillity. Nothing but the most extreme necessity could bring Austria to agree to such a proposal, and that Court would certainly first try the event of a contest. There appears, indeed, to be so little justice in insisting upon such an arrangement between Powers not engaged in the war, as a condition of peace between those who are parties in it, and it is so evidently contrary to our defensive system, that on the principles already repeatedly stated it would be impossible for this country to give any expectation of supporting Prussia in a contest on such grounds.' How could the Prussian King, it was asked, defend himself from the gravest reproach if, having just made an offensive alliance with Turkey, he proceeded to sacrifice Turkish interests 'for the purpose of gaining an acquisition for Poland and an additional security for his own frontier?'

Most amicably, but at the same time most explicitly, Ewart was directed to press these considerations on the King of Prussia, to beg that instructions conformable to them should be sent to Vienna, St. Petersburg, Stockholm, and Constantinople, and to urge that measures should be at once taken in the latter capital 'for setting aside by mutual consent the late alliance, and for procuring an immediate armistice, at all events between that Court and Austria.'[1]

[1] Leeds to Ewart, March 30, 1790.

This despatch very nearly broke up the Triple Alliance. The King of Prussia angrily blamed England for proposing an armistice to the belligerent Powers without any previous concert or communication with his allies; and several long and acrimonious discussions ensued.[1] He now saw clearly that if Prussia provoked a war she would be isolated, and would obtain neither moral nor material support from England; and he resolved reluctantly to follow the English line of policy, but to insist upon applying it with such a degree of severity that a rupture was likely to take place in which England would be involved. He agreed to support the proposal for an armistice, but insisted, in opposition to the English ministry, that it should be limited to two months, and also that the Emperor should send no troops to the Netherlands during the negotiation. He consented at last that the treaty with Turkey should be set aside if the Court either of Vienna or of St. Petersburg agreed to make peace on the basis of the *status quo*. He consented that this should be put forward as the basis of pacification; but he would not hear of the qualifications suggested in the English despatch, and insisted 'on the strict acceptance of the *status quo* without any modification.'[2] If this was not adopted, the alternative must be either war, or a negotiation founded on the Prussian plan of an extended exchange of territory. The chief object of the war party was now to provoke a refusal from the King of Hungary.[3]

The feeling between the ministers of the two countries was at this time extremely hostile, and in the opinion of the English Government the tortuous and ambitious policy of Prussia formed the main danger to European peace. 'His Prussian Majesty,' Lord Auck-

[1] Ewart to Leeds, April 18, 1790

[2] Ibid. April 18, 1790.

[3] Ibid. July 18, 1790.

land wrote confidentially to Keith, 'has brought himself to acquiesce in our objections—to declaring the Independence; but I have the fullest evidence that nothing less than an absolute and inevitable necessity will induce him to contribute by word or deed to replacing the Netherlands under their old government. But, besides, his treaty with the Porte commits him almost irrevocably to everything that can tend to increase the confusion of the world; and without any other provocation than the Count de Hertzberg's desire to deprive Austria of Galicia and the Netherlands, and to give to Prussia Thorn and Dantzig, as an equivalent for Galicia from the Poles.' Auckland spoke bitterly of the extreme danger of a new and wanton war, the indecency of the grounds that were put forward, 'the utter unreasonableness of expecting England and the United Provinces to support these projects, to which they are not called by any sense, either of interest, or of policy, or of justice.'[1]

It was necessary for the King of Prussia to answer the Austrian invitation to exercise his good offices, and he did so by a full exposition of his views. The Russian proposal to establish, under a prince of the Russian rite, a new kingdom, including Wallachia, Moldavia, and Bessarabia, was pronounced perfectly inadmissible; and the only feasible plan for making peace was the *status quo*, advocated by England, or 'an arrangement.' The meaning of the latter term was fully developed in a confidential communication made to the Austrian minister. The King of Prussia, it was said, has negotiated, but not yet ratified, a treaty with Turkey, which involved the recovery of Galicia. This would probably bring Poland into the field, and would lead to a Prussian recognition of the independence of the Belgic provinces.

[1] *Memoirs of Sir R. Keith*, ii. 267, 268.

Galicia must always, while in the hands of Austria, be a danger to Prussia, and if it is not amicably ceded, sooner or later Russia and Prussia would combine to drive her out. It was suggested, under these circumstances, that Austria, Russia, and Prussia should make an arrangement on these lines. The two Imperial Courts should restore Moldavia, Wallachia, and Bessarabia to the Porte. Austria should restore Galicia to Poland, with the exception of a tract contiguous to Hungary, on condition that Poland should cede Dantzig and Thorn to Prussia; and, in that case, Prussia would oblige the Turks to restore the limits of the Peace of Passarowitz, would abstain from recognising the independence of the Flemish provinces, and would even induce them to submit to Austrian rule on the guarantee of their Constitution. The Porte, on receiving back Moldavia, Wallachia, and Bessarabia, was formally to abandon all claims to the Crimea, and was to cede to Russia the district and town of Oczakow to the Dniester, on condition of Russia re-establishing in favour of Sweden the limits of Finland, on the footing of the Peace of Nyslot. If the King of Hungary agrees to support this arrangement, the King of Prussia will vote for his election as Emperor. He must consent, however, with little delay; otherwise Prussia will ratify her treaty with Turkey, and will acknowledge the Belgic independence.[1]

[1] *Insinuation verbale lue au ministre d'Autriche*, sent to England by Ewart in April 1790. See, too, Hertzberg, iii. 62-64. 'Ewart says to Leeds, April 18: 'In regard to the re-establishment of the limits of the Peace of Nyslot in the 4th Article of the inclosed Insinuation, I have good reason to suspect that it relates to the idea of negotiating an arrangement with the King of Sweden respecting Pomerania, though the Prussian ministers do not avow the intention.' It appears from Sybel that this conjecture was true, and that the Prussians hoped to obtain a part of Pomerania from Sweden.—*Hist. de l'Europe*, i. 172.

These negotiations were not favourably received. The cession of Galicia was entirely rejected by Leopold, and he declared that it was impossible for him, without the consent of Russia, to accept the armistice which England demanded. Prince Kaunitz, who was now past eighty, and whose judgment and temper were said to have been somewhat impaired by age, still retained great respect and influence at Vienna as the most illustrious of the ministers of Maria Theresa, and he threw serious obstacles in the way of peace; but his policy in this respect was counteracted with skill, and at the same time with singular delicacy, by the Vice-Chancellor, Count Cobenzel, who enjoyed the special confidence of Leopold.[1]

For some weeks, however, Europe was on the verge of a new war, and Ewart, in reporting the doubts entertained at Berlin of the possibility of a peaceful solution, added 'that this circumstance is by no means disagreeable here, as his Prussian Majesty, his generals, and his confidants are daily more convinced of the actual superiority of the forces and resources of this country over both Austria and Russia, which of course increases the inclination for war.' 'The ill-humour and complaints of Great Britain continue very violent amongst the officers about his Prussian Majesty's person.'[2] The Russian troops were at this time very inactive; but the Austrians, in spite of the diminution of their forces in Turkish territory, continued to press on the war. In consequence, it is said, of the panic produced by an earthquake, Orsova, which had been blockaded during the whole winter, was suddenly abandoned by the Turks. The Austrians prepared to besiege Widdin and Giurgevo,

[1] See the curious letters of Sir R. Keith.—*Mems. of Sir R. Keith*, ii. 277–293.

[2] Ewart to Leeds, April 24, 1790.

two strongly fortified places on the Danube; but they encountered near the latter fortress a severe defeat. It was feared at Berlin that they would protract the negotiation till a decisive blow had been struck, and the Prussian King accordingly insisted on receiving an answer from Vienna within three weeks, placed himself at the head of a great army which he had concentrated in Silesia, negotiated actively for co-operation with Sweden,[1] and secretly despatched a messenger to Constantinople to ratify his treaty with the Turks. The ratification omitted all mention of the Crimea; but it bound the King of Prussia to do the utmost in his power to restore to Turkey all the provinces that had been lost in the present war. As Ewart observed, this promise was made at the very time when Prussia was endeavouring to make an arrangement with Austria for her own benefit at the expense of Turkish territory.[2] 'I observed to the Prussian minister,' he continued, 'that this measure, however modified, was expressly contrary to the former assurances I had so often received in official papers, and verbally. He said he had received positive orders from the King, his master, to take this step, though he concealed it from me.'[3] Shortly afterwards, in consequence of the renewed representations of the English minister on the impropriety of ratifying this treaty, the Prussian minister agreed to write to M. de Knobelsdorff to represent to the Porte the expediency of setting it aside for the present, with a view to concluding a defensive alliance after the peace;[4] but the treaty, notwithstanding, subsisted, not only signed, but duly ratified, and it pledged Prussia to a speedy declaration of war.

[1] Ewart to Leeds, May 10, 5, June 16, 24, 1790.

[2] Ibid. July 8, 1790; Hertzberg, iii. 42, 43.

[3] Ibid. July 8, 1790.

[4] Ibid. August 4, 1790.

it was evident to the English minister at Berlin that the King desired war and detested the policy of the *status quo*, though, having once accepted it, he found it difficult to recede.[1] On the Austrian side, too, there seemed some slight prospect of 'an arrangement' being preferred to the *status quo*, for the King of Hungary, though he would not hear of the abandonment of Galicia, wished to keep Belgrade and two or three other frontier places, and appears to have at one time thought that this might be attained by giving a part of Moldavia to Poland.[2] At another time he made overtures to the Turks for a separate negotiation, and the King of Prussia learned with great indignation that he had informed the Turks of the Prussian proposals to make peace at their expense.[3]

Amid this maze of conflicting interests and intrigues, England, supported loyally by Holland, laboured steadily for the pacification of Europe. A speedy peace on the basis of the *status quo* was her object, and she hoped that it might be effected through the intervention of the allies, and followed by the inclusion of Turkey, and perhaps Sweden, in the defensive system. If, however, the belligerents chose to make a suitable peace without mediation, England would gladly acquiesce; nor did she wish to insist upon the *status quo* with an extreme or pedantic severity. 'Such moderate alteration as may be substituted by common consent,' without altering the relative strength of the belligerent Powers, she was ready, with the consent of Prussia, to accept, and she trusted that small and unimportant deviations from the *status quo* would not be made a cause of war. She had accepted, however, the *status quo* as the basis of negotiation, and, as Prussia interpreted it strictly, England

[1] Ewart to Leeds, June 24, 1790. [2] Ibid, June 16, 24, 1790.
[3] Ibid. July 8, 1790.

would so far support her as to prevent France and Denmark from attacking her while pursuing this end. On the other hand, the Prussian Government was again distinctly warned that it must expect no assistance from England in an aggressive war undertaken to deprive Austria of Galicia and the Netherlands; that the treaty between Prussia and Turkey was wholly opposed to the original policy of the allies; and that an attempt to deprive Turkev of what she had gained since the Peace of Passarowitz would very naturally make the Turks believe themselves sacrificed and betrayed. Dantzig and Thorn were the chief objects of Prussian policy. If they could be obtained by an amicable negotiation, and not by a forced cession or exchange, England would rejoice; and Leeds threw out the suggestion, that the cession might be coupled with, and effected by, a treaty of commerce connecting Poland with England and Holland by lowering transit duties in Prussia. Such a treaty would be a great advantage to both Poland and England, and would make English commerce independent of Russia.[1]

The idea, however, was not pressed, and the main object of English foreign policy was simply to put an end to the war between Turkey and the King of Hungary, and to prevent the struggle from extending to Prussia and Poland. These ends were at last accomplished. Leopold, perceiving the dangers that surrounded him, resolved at last to consent to peace without obtaining any increase of territory; and in the August of 1790 a convention was signed at Reichenbach, by which the Emperor agreed to enter into an armistice with the Turks, to open a negotiation for peace under the mediation of the maritime Powers on the basis of the strict *status quo*, as before the war, and to secure

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[1] Leeds to Ewart, May 21, July 20; Leeds to Jackson, Oct. 8, 1790.

the ancient constitution and privileges of the Belgic provinces under the guarantee of the allied Powers. Prussia abandoned for the present her designs on Dantzig and Thorn, though Hertzberg succeeded in obtaining a clause that, if Austria extended her frontiers on the side of Turkey, Prussia should obtain some equivalent advantage.

By this convention, and the armistice that followed it, the great evils and dangers that grew out of the war between Austria and Turkey were terminated. A considerable period, however, still elapsed before the formal peace was signed. It was negotiated by a congress which sat for about eight months at the little village of Sistova in Bulgaria. The letters of Keith, who very ably represented England at this congress, give a vivid picture of the innumerable delays and difficulties that were encountered in accomplishing a task which the convention of Reichenbach seemed to have rendered most simple. Many of them arose from causes that were childishly futile. Minute questions of form and precedence were elaborately disputed, and more than once the proceedings of the congress were postponed because the Turks desired important steps to be taken only on days which their astrologers deemed propitious. There were objections, however, of a more serious character, raised chiefly by Austria, and this Power showed a manifest desire to protract or obstruct the negotiations, in hopes of obtaining more favourable terms. The last and most formidable difficulty arose from a subtlety which could hardly have been surpassed by the Jesuit casuists. The Austrians had accepted the 'strict *status quo* as it existed before the war' as the basis of pacification, but they now raised a distinction between the *status quo de facto* and the *status quo de jure*, and demanded not a simple re-establishment of the frontiers as they actually existed before the war, but the esta-

blishment of a line of frontier which they maintained ought to have existed according to a disputed or violated article of the Peace of Belgrade. On this ground they claimed old Orsova and a little band of Croatia which, long before the war, had been in Turkish hands. The dispute rose so high, that the congress was for a time broken up, and a renewal of hostilities appeared inevitable; but the Austrians at last receded, and the Treaty of Sistova was signed on August 4, 1791, restoring peace on the basis of an exact re-establishment of the frontier before the war. By a separate convention, however, with Turkey, Austria obtained what she desired, though with the restriction that old Orsova must not be fortified.[1]

The troubles in the Austrian Netherlands were also appeased, but very slowly and with great difficulty. There was a long dispute about the Constitution which was to be restored; Leopold contending that it was the Constitution as it existed under Maria Theresa, Prussia and the maritime Powers insisting upon the more perfect Constitution of Charles VI. The population in the Flemish provinces were violently divided; and the question was ultimately settled by force. The insurgents elected the Archduke Charles, third son of the Emperor, hereditary Grand Duke of Belgium, on condition that their provinces should no longer belong to the dominions of the Emperor; but they were soon subdued by an overpowering Austrian army. A convention, signed by the Austrian minister with the ministers of the three mediating Powers, in December 1790, granting the Constitution of Charles VI., was not ratified by the Emperor, who consented only to restore the Constitution as it existed at the close of the reign of Maria

[1] See Coxe, vol. ii.; Hertzberg, tom. iii.; Sybel, *Hist. de l'Europe; Mems. of Sir R. Keith*; Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, ii. 196.

Theresa, and on this basis peace was at last established. The three mediating Powers, however, finding their counsels rejected, refused their ratifications, though Prussia at a later period gave her adhesion to the policy of the Emperor.[1]

The arrangement was not all that the allies desired; but it at least established a peace when a most dangerous war had appeared inevitable, and it was the more acceptable on account of the manifest desire of the Flemish democrats to unite their cause with that of the French. It also reacted speedily upon affairs in the North, where a peace between Russia and Sweden had been one of the first results of the convention of Reichenbach.

In order to understand the circumstances that produced it, we must retrace our steps and take up the threads of Swedish history where we dropped them in October 1788. At that period the intervention of the three allied Powers had arrested the Danish invasion of Sweden at a time when it would otherwise almost certainly have succeeded, and by securing the neutrality of Denmark had saved Sweden from imminent ruin. The position, however, of Gustavus III. continued to be very critical. His chief fleet was confined in Sweaborg. His army in Finland was paralysed by the mutiny of its officers. His exchequer was nearly empty, and Russia and Sweden were still at war, though Russia as yet abstained from aggressive measures. The King, however, was in no mood for peace. A policy of adventure, no matter how wild, had always an irresistible charm to his mind; and he had two great objects in view. He hoped to draw the three allied Powers into the war, to restore by their assistance the ascendency of Sweden in the Baltic, and recover all or nearly all that had been

[1] Koch, *Hist. des Traités de Paix*, tom. iv. 127–152; Coxe's *House of Austria*, ii. 690–698.

lost in 1721 and in 1743; and he also hoped to make a second revolution in the Constitution, which would break the power of the nobility and make his own power almost absolute.

Gustavus III. had none of the solidity and seriousness of a really great politician; he had neither the patience, the industry, the judgment, nor the economy that are necessary for ordinary government, but in that peculiar turn of mind and character that fits men for a revolutionary career, he has seldom been surpassed, and he was in fact the most successful revolutionist of the eighteenth century. He was a most skilful, daring, and unscrupulous political gambler; wonderfully quick and adroit in seizing opportunities, availing himself of the ebb and flow of popular passion, disguising personal ambition under popular pretexts. He had already, in 1772, directed and carried through with complete success one great revolution, and he now saw the possibility of winning a new victory in the same field.

At the time when the Danes invaded Sweden, his fortunes had sunk to the lowest point. In the wild province of Dalecarlia, it is true, the people had risen with enthusiasm at his summons to oppose the Danish invasion, and among the lower classes he still enjoyed a great popularity; but Stockholm was full of his enemies. The equestrian order was violently hostile to him. The burghers distrusted him, and were haunted with constant fear lest he should seize the bank. Edicts of toleration and frequent invasions of ecclesiastical privileges had offended the clergy, while the financial embarrassments, which were largely due to his excessive extravagance, and still more the unpopular monopoly by the Government of the distilleries, had excited a widespread discontent. The last two Diets had been stormy and hostile, and immediately after the mutiny in Finland the Senate strongly urged the necessity of convoking the States.

The King hesitated, without absolutely refusing. It was impossible with any colour of reason to deny that, in beginning without the authority of the States an offensive war against Russia, he had broken the plain letter of the Constitution. It was equally certain that by this unconstitutional act he had brought his country into a position of the gravest peril.

The intervention of Prussia and England, however, produced an immediate and most powerful reaction of opinion, and was popularly regarded as fully justifying the foresight of the King. 'The offer of our mediation,' wrote the English consul at Stockholm, 'has made a very great impression, and visibly damped the spirits of the anti-royalists.' 'An opinion prevails that we are only come forward to support the King and encourage him to continue the war with Russia. All those who oppose it, as being begun in an unjust and unconstitutional manner, seem now so much dejected that, if his Majesty should seize this opportunity of calling a Diet, he might, I am confident, make what change he pleased in the Constitution.'[1]

The King, like a skilful strategist, availed himself of every method of intensifying the feeling. The national animosity against the Danes was stimulated to fever-point by highly wrought descriptions of their treachery and of their violence during the late invasion; while, at the same time, the tide of popular feeling was turned with a tremendous force against the nobles. The mutiny of the officers in the face of the enemy was represented as an act of the basest treason, which had almost accomplished the ruin of the country, and which was due to the hostility of the nobles to the King. Texts from Scripture, denouncing vengeance against

[1] Keene to Carmarthen, Sept. 26, 1788; Keene to Fraser, Nov. 10, 1788; Jan. 9, 1789.

traitors who had sold themselves to the stranger, were posted up in the village churches. In the theatres every allusion hostile to the nobles was received with rapturous applause. Innumerable pamphlets of a similar tendency were circulated through all classes, and the King declared that the reign of monopoly must terminate, and that he would now throw the command of the army largely into the hands of the burghers, whom he could trust. On December 20, 1788, he entered Stockholm amid the acclamations of the people, and when the effervescence was still at its height the Diet was convoked. It was opened on February 2, 1789. In a speech, which was so eloquent and so admirably delivered that it excited the applause and admiration of all parties, the King urged the necessity of continuing the war till an honourable peace had been attained, deplored the conduct of 'a few traitors in Finland' who had yielded to the machinations of the enemy, and exhorted all classes to rally in defence of their country. He at the same time had the chief officers engaged in the mutiny seized and thrown into prison.

It soon appeared that he could count upon the unanimous adhesion of the order of the peasants, and upon commanding majorities in the orders of the burghers and of the clergy, while the nobles were irreconcilably hostile. A vote, thanking him for having secured the safety of the nation by declaring war, justified his recent conduct, and outside the Diet the populace and the common soldiers were strongly in his favour. By the order of the nobles, the conduct of the King was vehemently arraigned. They dwelt on his extravagance and his debts; on his alleged attempt to intimidate Stockholm by introducing a body of Dalecarlians as a garrison; on the persistent and virulent attacks which had recently been directed against themselves. Count Löwenhaupt, an old general who was a

strong partisan of the King, was appointed by him Marshal of the Diet, and therefore president of the nobles; and he endeavoured by the King's orders, but without success, to check the attacks. A fierce wrangle ensued, and at length the old marshal, declaring himself insulted, withdrew from the Diet and laid his complaints before the King.

On February 17, at eight o'clock in the morning, the four orders of the Diet were suddenly summoned to assemble in the same hall, to meet the King. He received them in great state, and he delivered a brilliant but most singular speech. Fifteen days before, he said, he had addressed the Diet, representing the urgent and imperative necessity of taking immediate measures to defend the coast of Sweden from Russian invasion, and to wipe away the stain which the late treachery in Finland had left on the Swedish name. The clergy, the burghers, and the peasants had responded to his appeal, and, forgetting all other considerations, had shown themselves faithful representatives of the patriotism of Sweden. But the nobles had acted differently. And then, in a strain of the fiercest invective, he accused them of favouring the intrigues and interests of the enemy; of wasting in frivolous recriminations a time which was vital to the defence of the country; of grossly insulting the Sovereign in the person of the old marshal who presided over their debates; of attempting to revive the hateful and hated aristocratic domination which had been shattered in 1772. He declared that if Finland was lost, if the coasts were devastated, and if the capital was menaced, the responsibility must rest upon those men who, rather than renounce their ambitions and their resentments, were ready to see the Russians enter Stockholm and dictate their terms; and he concluded by commanding the nobles, in an imperious voice and with a haughty gesture, at once to leave the

hall and prepare a deputation to carry their apologies to the insulted marshal.

A few fierce words were bandied to and fro, but at length the nobles retired to draw up a protest in justification of their acts, and left the King with the other three orders. He again ardently eulogised their loyalty, directed them to prepare a deputation to receive the new privileges he intended to confer on them, and declared the necessity of changing the Constitution so as to make political power centre in those who were truly loyal to their country.

Two agitated days followed, during which the popular feeling ran strongly and evidently on the side of the King; and on the 20th the decisive blow was struck. More than twenty nobles of the first rank and fortune were arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned by order of the King; and the next day, the Diet having been summoned, the King read to it a revised form of the Constitution, which gave him little less than absolute power. The exclusive power of declaring peace and war was to reside with him. The estates were not to be permitted to discuss any subject which he had not laid before them, and most of the privileges of the nobles were taken away. The power of voting taxes almost alone remained of the ancient Constitution, yet even this was seriously impaired, for the King was enabled to make an agreement with any town or province when the Diet was not sitting. The new Constitution was accepted with acclamation by the three orders, and in spite of some feeble protests from the nobility the Marshal of the Diet signed it in their name, and it was received as law throughout the country.

It remained to extort from the Diet supplies for the war. The three orders readily voted the subsidies for an unlimited time, but the order of the nobles, though broken and greatly intimidated, attempted to limit the

vote to two years. The night before the decisive vote, a thousand of the rabble were entertained at the King's expense, and they marched half drunk upon the house of the nobles. The military and the burghers were put under arms, and sixteen rounds of shot were distributed to each man. Under these circumstances, the King, accompanied by a clamorous crowd, entered the chamber of the nobles, demanded an immediate vote of credit, and declared that anyone who opposed it was a traitor to the country. After some vain protests, and amid a scene of wild confusion and irregularity, the nobles yielded, or were alleged to have yielded; and next day the Diet was dissolved. Three weeks later, the few senators who had not already resigned were dismissed. The Senate, which, though crippled and enfeebled by the revolution of 1772, still retained some shadow of its old independence, was abolished, and a new council, composed partly of nobles and partly of commoners, appointed by the Crown.[1]

In this manner Gustavus III. had the almost unexampled fortune of accomplishing for the second time and with perfect success a violent revolution in the Constitution of his country. The nobles who had been imprisoned without any colour of law on February 20 were soon released, but many of the more important officers who had revolted in Finland were brought to trial; several were condemned to death, and a few were actually executed. The King hastened to his army in Finland, where the armistice signed in the previous

[1] Compare the descriptions of this extraordinary scene by M. Pons, the French ambassador, in Geffroy's *Gustave III. et la Cour de France*, ii. 80-82, and in a letter in the Record Office from Keene to Fraser, May 5, 1789. In addition to Geffroy and the Record Office correspondence, I have made use of Geyer's *Hist. de Suède*; the *Ecrits politiques de Gustave III.*; the account in the *Annual Register* and in De la Croix's *Constitutions de l'Europe*.

year had expired, and he took part in a victorious battle which was fought on June 28. The campaign of 1789, however, produced no results. There were many skirmishes, with various fortunes, and the King exposed himself with great courage and temerity, but he acquired no hold upon Russian Finland; while on sea, the Prince of Nassau, who had hastened from the Black Sea, inflicted a severe defeat upon the Swedes on August 24. This was the last naval battle of the year.

In spite of the taxes that had been extracted, the King was now in desperate financial difficulties. The promised subsidy from the Turks had not arrived. Attempts to raise a loan in Holland failed; and in May 1789 the King of Prussia resolved to lend him a million of dollars, hoping that this would induce him to adhere to the system of the allied Powers.[2]

From this time till the close of the war the King of Prussia continued secretly, at short intervals, to supply the Swedish King with small sums to carry on the war, and he induced England to join in the subsidy. It was alleged that without this assistance Sweden must be completely crushed, and the balance of power in the Baltic annihilated, or that the King would negotiate a separate peace with Russia, which would retard a general pacification, or that he would throw himself, as he sometimes threatened, into the arms of France.[3] Whatever Power, the English consul at Stockholm said, gave him the largest subsidies and most favoured his ambitious designs would secure his alliance, but the allies agreed that his schemes of aggrandisement should not be en-

[1] See *Annual Register*, 1789, pp. 196–200.

[2] Ewart to Leeds, May 23, 1789.

[3] These negotiations and subsidies may be traced in the Prussia Correspondence at the Record Office. Ewart to Leeds, Jan. 4, May 10, 1790. Leeds to Ewart, Feb. 26, May 21, 1790.

couraged, and that their object should be to secure the independence of Sweden by a peace on the terms of the *status quo* as it existed before the war.[1]

The war between Sweden and Russia in 1790 consisted chiefly of naval battles desperately and skilfully contested. On May 13 the Russians repelled with severe loss an attempt to destroy the fleet which lay in shelter under the guns of Revel, but two days later Gustavus almost annihilated a great division of the Russian galley fleet at Frederikshamn. On June 3 and 4 there was another battle, indecisive in its results, but on the whole unfavourable to the Swedes; and the unexpected arrival of a second Russian fleet for a time made the total destruction of the Swedish fleet appear inevitable. It was extricated at last by a sudden change of wind and by the skilful manœuvres of its commander, the Duke of Sudermania; but a month later the Russians gained a decisive victory at Wyborg, and the losses of the Swedes were then so crushing, that their navy seemed irretrievably ruined. Yet, by an extraordinary display of skill and energy, the King of Sweden was able in less than a week to bring the remnant of his fleet again into battle; and, availing himself of a favourable opportunity, he closed the war by a brilliant victory.[2] A few weeks later Europe was startled by the announcement that he had made a peace with Russia on the basis of the *status quo* as it existed before the war.

The motives of both parties were very evident. The convention of Reichenbach had just deprived the Empress of the co-operation of Austria, and it seemed probable that Prussia, England, and perhaps Holland would soon be in arms against her, and that an English

[1] Leeds to Ewart, June 24, 1789; May 21, Aug. 14, 1790.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1791, pp. 183–190.

fleet would be in the Baltic. Under these circumstances, Catherine saw that it was necessary to yield something. Her main object was to acquire territory on the side of Turkey. She had never sought or eagerly pursued the Swedish war, which had proved most detrimental to her navy; and as early as the May of 1790 she had declared that she was quite ready to make peace with Sweden, 'on condition of the former treaties being renewed, and a mutual amnesty being agreed upon.'[1] She was most anxious to avoid what she deemed the humiliation of making peace through the intervention of foreign Powers, and a separate peace would probably baffle one of the chief designs of the three allies. They had hoped to include Sweden in their alliance, to isolate Russia and to secure one of the Baltic provinces in their system; but if a separate peace could be negotiated, Sweden would be at perfect liberty to ally herself with Russia and with Denmark for the protection of the Baltic. No sooner, therefore, had intelligence arrived at St. Petersburg that the agreement with Austria was about to be concluded, than the Empress despatched a courier to Finland with offers of peace to the King of Sweden. It is said that he had not yet heard of what had happened at Reichenbach; a Prussian subsidy had just been sent to him, and a squadron of seventeen English ships was lying in the Downs ready to sail for the Baltic.[2]

The Russian Empress in taking this step showed remarkable political sagacity, and Gustavus readily accepted her proposal. As she offered him peace on the exact terms which the allies had agreed to secure, he had very little prospect of gaining anything by continuing the war, and it was much more flattering to his

[1] Whitworth to Leeds, May 16, 1790.

[2] See a very remarkable letter of Lord Malmesbury, *Diaries and Correspondence*, ii. 435–437.

vanity to obtain peace for himself than to obtain it through the intervention of the allies. To a man of his type of character there was indeed something exceedingly gratifying in the whole transaction. He had made war, without a shadow of provocation, against a Power much stronger than himself. He had conducted it without an avowed ally in the North of Europe, and in spite of the most formidable domestic dissensions. The last battle had been a Swedish victory, and he had now the satisfaction of making peace without any loss of territory, and at the invitation of his great opponent. On the other hand, Sweden had already lost 50,000 men, fifteen ships of the line, and a great many smaller vessels.[1] Her finances were utterly exhausted, and she had everything to fear from a continuation of the war.

There was also another consideration which weighed upon his mind. For some time he had been watching with the keenest interest the great revolutionary drama which was unfolding itself in France. He had himself swept away almost every constitutional limit to his power amid the general applause of his subjects, and he had done so chiefly by carrying out, of his own free will, one of the great objects of the French revolutionists, by destroying feudal and aristocratic privileges, and throwing open the highest positions in the Government to all ranks.[2] He always maintained, and probably with justice, that if he had been at the helm instead of Lewis XVI., he would have weathered the storm. The interest of events in France had eclipsed that of his war; he was impatient at finding himself far from news in a distant province of his dominions, and he was now eagerly looking forward to the possibility of allying

[1] Geyer, *Hist. de Suède*, p. 520.

[2] See some striking remarks on this aspect of his policy in the *Annual Register*, 1791, p. 179.

himself with Russia in a great counter-revolution in the interests of monarchy in Europe.[1]

The Peace of Warela was signed on August 15, 1790, and although some questions of detail remained to be settled between Sweden and Russia, it restored tranquillity to the North, and closed another chapter of the great work of the pacification of Europe. Gustavus, however, did not long survive his success. The implacable animosities which he had aroused among his nobles pursued him to the end; a conspiracy was formed against his life, and on March 16, 1792, he was shot by Anckarstrom at a masked ball in the theatre of Stockholm.

Up to the time of the Peace of Warela, the Triple Alliance between England, Prussia, and Holland, in spite of the many difficulties and differences that have been recounted, had proved on the whole eminently successful. Holland had been pacified, and the danger of French ascendency in her councils had been averted. Denmark had been compelled to withdraw from her attack on Sweden and to declare her neutrality during the war. The war between Austria and Turkey had been terminated, leaving the frontiers of the two empires almost unchanged. Austrian Flanders was rapidly regaining its tranquillity; its old customs and privileges had been substantially secured, and now peace had been established between Russia and Sweden, not indeed through the mediation of the allies, but at least through fear of their intervention and on the terms which they desired. In the beginning of 1789 there had been serious question of a quadruple alliance of France and Spain with Russia and the Emperor,[2] and when the quarrel with England about Nootka Sound

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[1] Geffroy, *Gustave III. et la Cour de France.*

[2] *Correspondance diplomatique du Baron de Staël*, pp. 97, 98. See, too, a letter of Ewart to Leeds, April 20, 1789.

arose, Spain at once made overtures to Catherine;[1] but these dangers seemed now to have faded away. The Emperor had made peace. France was too occupied with internal troubles to pay much attention to anything beyond her border. The dispute with Spain had been settled, and the Empress and the Turks remained alone at war. But the success of the allies, and the foreign policy of Pitt, now met with a great check. The attempt to induce or compel Russia to make peace through the mediation of the allies, on the basis of the *status quo* as it existed before the war, surrendering to the Turks Oczakow and its adjoining territory to the Dniester, proved a complete and somewhat ignominious failure.

From the very beginning of the war, the acquisition of this fortress and territory by the Russians seemed probable. As early as November 1787 Eden had discussed with Montmorin at Paris the probable course of the Eastern war, and the French minister had expressed his opinion that it would leave Constantinople secure and untouched, but would give Moldavia and Wallachia to the Emperor, Oczakow and one or two other places to Russia.[2] The capture of Oczakow had been the first great success of Potemkin. It had been the result of a siege of extraordinary length, conducted with extraordinary resolution, and accompanied by extraordinary bloodshed; and from this time the contingency of its retention by Russia had been continually referred to. In February 1789, when the Russians had made comparatively few sacrifices, Whitworth, the English minister at St. Petersburg, wrote that Potemkin, who

[1] Whitworth to Leeds, May 16, June 1, Nov. 11, 1790.

[2] *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 273. As early as 1782, Sir James Harris had warned the English Government of the desire of Catherine and Potemkin to seize Oczakow.—*Malmesbury Correspondence*, ii. 13.

appeared of all Russian politicians the most favourable to the English alliance, would, he believed, gladly make peace at once through the intervention of the allies; that he hoped to keep Oczakow and the adjoining territory, but that, if necessary, he was prepared to 'consent to the town and fortifications being razed, reserving the country between the Dniester and the Dnieper, which he justly considers the key to the Crimea.'[1] In the last days of 1789 and in the beginning of 1790, Catherine had requested the interference of England, and expressed her willingness to make peace on the condition of including in her empire Oczakow and its territory to the Dniester, and of creating an independent kingdom consisting of Bessarabia, Wallachia, and Moldavia. The latter condition was emphatically and unequivocally rejected, and in the course of a few months it was dropped; but though the English Government suggested the *status quo* as the basis of peace, and described the article relating to Oczakow as 'most doubtful' and likely to induce the Turks to continue the war, their language was by no means that of unqualified hostility.[2]

On certain conditions, which were not in the least intended for the protection of Turkey, Prussia, as we have already seen, was at one time perfectly ready to acquiesce in the Russian demand. In March 1790 Ewart, in describing the negotiations for giving Prussia Dantzig and Thorn, and depriving Austria of Galicia, mentions the opinion of the King of Prussia that an armed interference of the allies would bring about a speedy peace. Russia's 'increasing embarrassments would make her satisfied with Oczakow and its district,

[1] Whitworth to Carmarthen, Feb. 6, 1789.

[2] See the letters of the Vice-Chancellor Ostermann, May 1790, and a letter of Leeds to the Russian ambassador in London, July 1790; also *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 906, 907, 960, 997.

and . . . the Porte might be prevailed on to accept reasonable conditions, such as the cessions above mentioned, and the re-establishment of the limits of the Peace of Passarowitz.'[1] If a peace could be negotiated on the basis of the cession of Galicia by Austria, the King of Prussia expressly stated that he 'would have no objection to the Empress obtaining Oczakow.'[2] I have mentioned also the Prussian project which was suggested about this time, that Russia should restore to Sweden the portion of Finland which she had lost by the Peace of Abo in 1743, and that Russia should be allowed in compensation to retain Oczakow and its territory. This proposal was actually sent by the Prussians to St. Petersburg, where it was peremptorily rejected.[3]

From the uniform language of the Russian Government, there could be little doubt that, unless the course of the war was completely reversed, it would insist on retaining Oczakow and its territory at the peace; nor was there anything unreasonable in this demand. Whatever provocations Russia may have given, Turkey had at least begun the war, and she had been almost invariably defeated. The Empress showed her moderation by receding from her first demand for the constitution of Moldavia, Wallachia, and Bessarabia into a separate kingdom, and by consenting to give up all her conquests between the Dniester and the Danube; and she could hardly, as a victorious Power, with any credit to herself or any regard to her people, surrender Oczakow,

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[1] Ewart to Leeds, March 2, 1790.

[2] Ibid. May 25, 1790.

[3] Ibid. April 18, 1790. See, too, some letters of Count Ostermann in the Russian Correspondence, dated May 1790. In another letter Ewart says: 'It is much wished by this Court (Berlin) that Russia should be made to accept the *status quo*, or that she should not obtain Oczakow and its district without making a proportional arrangement with Sweden.'—Ewart to Leeds, June 4, 1790.

which had been most honourably won and which was of extreme importance to the security of her dominions. More than once Turks and Tartars had availed themselves of its shelter to devastate unprotected parts of the Russian territory; it enabled the Turks to cut off Kherson and the interior Russian dominions along the Dnieper from all communication with the Black Sea; and it placed the commerce of the Crimea almost at their mercy. These were sufficient reasons for the Empress insisting on retaining it, and it was not clear why England should object. Whatever might be the importance of Oczakow, it was certainly far less dangerous to Turkey than the Crimea, which Russia had seized with the full approval of England. Although the Russian arms had been steadily successful in 1788, 1789, and 1790, the speeches of the King to Parliament expressed no anxiety. On the contrary, while lamenting the continuance of the war, he 'rejoiced that it did not endanger the power and interests of his kingdom.' Under these circumstances, it was with great surprise that the English public learned that Pitt was determined to demand the restitution of Oczakow and its territory to Turkey, and to support his demand by force.

The explanation of this proceeding, which appeared very perplexing to contemporaries, will, I think, be found chiefly in the Prussian connection. In this, as in most of the plans of recent foreign policy, the two allies showed themselves widely different in their position and interests. England was a constitutional monarchy, directed by a minister who was prepared to go to war if necessary, who was always ready to act in difficult emergencies with promptitude and decision, but who deprecated war as a great evil, and who had attached his reputation mainly to certain schemes of financial and political reform which could only be realised by a continuance of peace. Prussia was a despotic

monarchy, and its sovereign, believing himself to be in possession of the best army in Europe, was extremely anxious to distinguish himself in the field, and full of plans for enlarging his territory. On the other hand, Pitt regarded the defensive alliance which had been formed as the cardinal fact of his foreign policy. He believed it to be of the highest importance to the security and stability of the present system of Europe; and he hoped that if Turkey, Sweden, and perhaps the Emperor were included in it, he would have established an irresistible barrier against the ambition both of Russia and of the House of Bourbon, and would have guaranteed a long period of European peace. The alliance, however, had been already greatly strained. Prussia had with much difficulty been induced to abandon or defer schemes of ambition which she had most unexpectedly raised; and England, in her turn, had been obliged to agree with Prussia in demanding not merely an approximate, but a strict *status quo* as the basis of pacification.

This had actually been attained in the peace between Turkey and the Emperor, and in the peace between Russia and Sweden, and it was somewhat difficult not to ask the same terms in favour of the Turks. It was especially difficult, as the Turks were so elated by the prospect of a Prussian alliance that they now declared that they would not make peace till they had recovered the Crimea.[1] England had resisted the Prussian project of making Turkey compensate the Emperor for the sacrifices he was asked to make in the interests of Prussia, and she had undertaken, in conjunction with Prussia, to negotiate with Russia in the interests of Turkey. Could she under these circumstances, and in opposition to the wishes of her ally, require Turkey

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[1] Ewart to Leeds, Sept. 18, 1790.

alone of the belligerent Powers to make a cession of territory?

It is manifest that all the recent proceedings of the English Government had gone far beyond the strict terms of a defensive alliance; but so many steps had been already taken that it was difficult to recede. England and Prussia had practically undertaken in common the pacification of Europe, and it was scarcely possible for England at this stage, and after having herself repeatedly insisted on the *status quo*, to refuse her continued co-operation without sacrificing the Prussian alliance and all the benefits to be expected from it. How great those benefits might be had just been signally shown. When the quarrel about Nootka Sound had brought England to the verge of a war with Spain, the Prussian Government was reminded of the obligation of the defensive alliance. It would be impossible to conceive a question more unconnected with Prussian interests, and no free nation whose policy was controlled by national opinion would have permitted its rulers to go to war in such a cause. But the King of Prussia at once recognised his obligation, and Count Hertzberg was directed to assure the English envoy that 'the King, his master, was determined scrupulously to fulfil his engagements with the Court of London; and that he (Count Hertzberg) had been expressly authorised to say that, if his Majesty should think proper to undertake a war against Spain, in case that Power should not comply with the terms his Majesty's ambassador at Madrid was instructed to propose, his Prussian Majesty would consider a commencement of hostilities under such circumstances a *casus fœderis* of his defensive alliance with his Majesty, and would not fail to furnish him the succours stipulated in the said alliance.'[1]

[1] Jackson to Leeds, Oct. 22, 1790. Jackson represented England at Berlin during the absence of Ewart.

Such was the loyalty with which the Prussian King was prepared to fulfil his obligations, and it rendered it specially difficult for England to refuse to assist Prussia in procuring a restitution of Oczakow, which Prussian statesmen regarded as both a European and a Prussian interest.

It must be added that the importance of the Eastern question, the danger of Constantinople falling into the hands or under the influence of Russia, and the increasing probability of such an event, had of late been much more felt than formerly by English statesmen, and had given a direction to their foreign policy widely different from that of Chatham and of the Coalition Ministry.[1] It must be added, too, that the design of sending a British fleet to the Baltic in order to enforce a peace had been formed at a time when Sweden and Russia were still at war,[2] and English ministers believed that Russia was now so exhausted that a simple demonstration of force would be sufficient to attain their ends. Twice already within a very few years such a policy had been pursued, and on each occasion with eminent success. In 1787, when Prussia restored the House of Orange and crushed the French party in Holland, a French interference had been prevented by the decided attitude of England, and the still more recent difficulty with Spain had been settled triumphantly without a

[1] Pitt, in the course of one of the debates on this question, urged 'that the systematic political aim of Russia had been the establishment of a naval power in the Black Sea, and thence he drew the necessity of our forming a connection with Turkey. He said that Montesquieu, who best understood the subject, expressly declared that the Turkish Empire, although it undoubtedly contained in it many symptoms of decay, must last much longer than was generally imagined, because when an attack of an alarming nature should be made upon it, the European maritime Powers would feel it to be their interest to come instantly to its aid and rescue it from danger.'—*Parl. Hist.* xxix. 996.

[2] Leeds to Ewart, August 14, 1790.

war, chiefly through the promptitude with which the English Government had prepared itself for the worst.

These considerations appear to me to supply the real motives that governed Pitt in a step which the event showed to be one of the great miscalculations of his ministry. The offer to Russia of the mediation of the allies to effect a peace with Turkey on the basis of the *status quo*, had been made by Prussia in September 1790.[1] The answer, insisting on the retention of Oczakow and its district to the Dniester, had been given to Prussia alone. That to England was for some time delayed, and in the meantime the English Secretary of State, being evidently anxious if possible to avert violent measures, directed Whitworth to employ the most conciliatory language. The proposal of England, he was instructed to say, was a friendly proposal for the purpose of putting an end to a bloody and exhausting war. If, however, as there was some reason to believe, the Empress thought it beneath her dignity to accept peace through the mediation of other Powers, the allies had no wish to insist upon a formal mediation. They would gladly use their good offices informally, and if Russia thought fit to open direct negotiations with Turkey on the basis of the *status quo*, they would do all in their power to assist her. They would go somewhat further. The Turks had never abandoned their claims to the Crimea, and they had made its recovery one of their chief reasons for declaring war. If Russia would accept a peace on the basis of the *status quo*, England would use her influence to obtain from the Turks a formal renunciation of the Crimea under the guarantee of the allies. 'A concession of this important object,' wrote Leeds, 'as it was the origin and an avowed purpose of the war, cannot be unacceptable to her Imperial Majesty,

[1] Whitworth to Leeds, Sept. 10, 1790.

and should, I should hope, be sufficient to answer her wishes.'[1]

There are few things less beautiful than these eighteenth-century wars, begun in so many instances through the idle vanity and ambition of sovereigns who desired to round off their dominions; entailing in their course, over vast areas of population and territory, the most multifarious forms of suffering and ruin, and terminated at last amid a profusion of congratulations and compliments and decorations by treaties which left the relative position of the belligerent Powers unchanged. Catherine was fully resolved that her present war should not be of this description. Her Vice-Chancellor was directed to inform the English minister of the indignation that was felt by the Empress at the 'unparalleled conduct' of the allies in attempting to 'dictate in so arbitrary a manner to a sovereign perfectly independent and in want of no assistance to procure the conditions which seemed to her best suited to satisfy her honour.' Rather than tarnish the glory of a long and illustrious reign by accepting the terms of the allies, the Empress was ready to encounter any risk, and she would only accept the good offices of the King of England 'inasmuch as they may tend to procure for her the indemnification she requires of Oczakow and its district.'[2]

It was soon seen that these were no idle words. The fortifications of Riga and Revel were at once strengthened, and orders were given to prepare thirty-six ships of the line for sea. Already, at the close of 1789, Whitworth had noticed how a ukase of the Empress was received as a voice from heaven, and how by five successive levies about every thirty-seventh man in the Empire had been drafted into the army.[3] But

[1] Leeds to Whitworth, Oct. 19, Nov. 14, 1790.

[2] Whitworth to Leeds, Nov. 18 1790; Jan. 10, 1791.

[3] Ibid. Nov. 11, 1789.

although there were many signs of weariness and discontent, and many libels against the Empress, there could be no doubt that in the struggle she contemplated she could count upon all the forces of the nation. Nothing, Whitworth said, except absolute necessity would oblige her to yield; and he proceeded to describe the steps which were necessary to success. A British fleet must be in the Baltic early in spring. The King of Prussia must ratify his treaty with the Turks, and send an army into the field. Every effort must be made to draw the King of Sweden into the confederation. His harbours would be most important for the British fleet, and he might make an invaluable diversion in Finland. An expedition might be made against Archangel, and a British fleet should enter the Black Sea, where there were now lying, in the harbour of Sebastopol, eleven or twelve Russian ships of the line and as many frigates, all, it was said, in very bad condition. Something might also be done to stop the supplies of money, which Russian statesmen found it much more difficult to obtain than supplies of men. Russian loans were raised at Amsterdam by means of the great banker, Hope. If this source were stopped, she would soon, through want of funds, be obliged to make peace.[1]

While these communications were passing under cipher from the English ambassador at St. Petersburg to the Government at home, the English envoy at Berlin was in confidential communication with the Prussian ministers, and especially with General Mollendorf, whose opinions both on political and military questions weighed greatly with the King of Prussia. Their decided opinion was that the allies were bound on every ground to insist upon the surrender of Oczakow and

[1] Whitworth to Leeds, Nov. 18, Dec. 28, 1790; Jan. 10, Feb. 5, 18, 1791.

its district, and upon a peace based on the *status quo* as it existed before the war. The Emperor and Sweden having made such a peace, the allies could not with honour demand less for the Turks. Turkey would probably refuse peace on any other terms: if she yielded to necessity she would consider herself betrayed, and would be so alienated from the three allies that there would be little or no prospect of including her in their alliance, while Russia would be more and more confirmed in the haughty dispositions she had of late displayed. The prompt and decisive intervention of the allies was imperatively needed. The Turkish army was now so broken and demoralised that, in the opinion of Prussian military men, it would not be able to resist for another campaign; and every day showed more clearly the danger of too great a share of the balance of power falling into the hands of Russia. The possession of Oczakow by Russia was a matter of some direct interest both to Prussia and England, for it would give her the command of the mouth of the Dniester, and enable her to combine the commerce of all the southern provinces of Poland with her other resources on the Black Sea; and its military importance, the most competent judges in Berlin were agreed, was very great. It was now evident that the total destruction of the Turkish Empire and the expulsion of the Turks from Europe was the ultimate object of Russia. The extension of her empire along the Black Sea was a great step towards its accomplishment; and Oczakow would materially assist the Russians in any future expedition against Constantinople. For these reasons, the allies ought promptly to intervene, and there could be no question that their intervention would be successful. A large Prussian force was already concentrated in Silesia, and when co-operating with the Turks it would prove irresistible. It must be the task of Eng-

land to send a fleet to the Baltic, where she could easily crush all resistance. None of the Prussian ministers, the English envoy said, in urging these points, made use of the promise of Prussia to support England in her quarrel with Spain, as an argument, but he added that he knew 'that the King of Prussia considered it as furnishing an additional claim to the assistance of Great Britain in the support of a system which he pledged himself to maintain.'[1]

The reply of the English Government to these representations was very cordial. Having lately been attempting to establish commercial relations with Poland, they admitted that they had some commercial interest in the restoration of Oczakow, and they fully concurred with the military authorities of Prussia in their high estimate of its military importance. The fact that in two successive Turkish wars the Russians had to undertake a long, tedious, and wasting siege of Oczakow clearly proved that it was a real barrier to Turkey. It would probably prove equally formidable on the other side if it became a stronghold for Russian aggression, and it would certainly enable Russia to make a much more effectual military use of the Crimea. The English ministers were therefore prepared to cooperate with Prussia in insisting upon its surrender. They hoped at the end of April 1791 to send to the Baltic thirty-five ships of the line and a proportionate number of frigates, while a Prussian army marched into Livonia, and they would also send, if necessary, a squadron of ten or twelve ships of the line to the Black Sea. They desired, however, that in the first place a joint representation should be made to the Empress; that the opinions of the neutral Powers should be gathered, and especially that a secret treaty should be

[1] Ewart to Leeds, Sept. 26; Jackson to Leeds, Dec. 16, 21, 1790.

negotiated with the King of Sweden, stipulating his neutrality and the use of his ports in return for a secret subsidy of two or three hundred thousand pounds to be raised by England and Prussia. They added, too, their hope that both England and Prussia would agree to take nothing for themselves. If, as the result of the war, it was deemed necessary to insist on terms beyond the *status quo*, the allies should in these 'look to no acquisition for themselves, but to procuring a still greater degree of security for the Porte on the Black Sea.'[1]

In this manner a plan of co-operation was laid for a new war. There were, however, still some misgivings and hesitations at Berlin. Count Hertzberg desired a war with Austria much more than a war with Russia. He rejected the commercial propositions of England relating to Poland. He declared that England would ruin Prussia by dragging her into a wholly unprofitable war, and he still contended that the acquisition of Dantzig and Thorn must be made the leading object of Prussian policy. As the Court of Berlin was in negotiation with Poland for the purpose of obtaining permission for Prussian troops to pass through that country to Russia, the English envoy thought that in some way the desired cession might be still attained.[2]

In Russia, military preparations were pushed on with desperate ardour. The finances of the country were so exhausted that paper money was at twenty-five per cent. discount; but the supply of men was inexhaustible, and in the hands of an imperious despot it was likely to be employed to the utmost. The philanthropist Howard had made his last journey through Russia in the autumn of 1789, and he has left an appalling picture of the

[1] Leeds to Jackson, Jan. 8, March 27, 1791.

[2] Jackson to Leeds, Feb. 6, March 1791.

reckless waste of life which he witnessed. In no other country, he said, had he found so little attention paid to the military. In the hospitals, the soldiers who had fought so bravely at Oczakow were dying by thousands on beds of hard coarse reeds, without linen or bedclothes or proper medicines or any but the coarsest food. Others, but half-recovered from wounds or sickness, were compelled to attempt long marches, till they sank dying along the roads. Upwards of 70,000 soldiers and sailors had died in the Russian hospitals in a single year.[1]

But the stream of recruits still poured in, and the Turkish war was pushed on with great vigour, and, of late, with brilliant success. On December 22, 1790, after a siege of about a month, Suwarrow succeeded in taking by assault the great fortified town of Ismail. More than 38,000 Turks perished in the terrible and indiscriminate butchery that ensued when the Russians poured over the battlements; but this, like many other hideous pages of Eastern warfare, would have been long since forgotten had not an old history describing the siege and massacre of Ismail chanced to fall into the hands of a great English poet, who has immortalised them in two admirable cantos of his 'Don Juan.' On the Cuban and in the Caucacus, the Russian arms were likewise successful, and Potemkin was busily employed in strengthening the Black Sea fleet and inducing skilful foreign officers to serve in it. Whitworth believed that he was resolved if possible to make peace at Constantinople, and that, if not speedily opposed, he might succeed in his design. The Empress delayed her final arrangements of territory with Sweden in order to draw that Power more closely to Russia, and she proposed a Baltic alliance of Russia, Denmark and Sweden.

Among the many schemes that were about this time

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[1] Field's *Life of Howard*, pp. 456–465.

devised was one which, though hopelessly wild and impracticable, is curious as showing that an idea was already in the air which was destined at a later period to have great influence on international politics. In the 'Secret History of the Court of Berlin,' which was written by Mirabeau in 1786, there is a very remarkable letter on the possibility of Russian armies some day penetrating through Central Asia into India. He says that at the time when the advance of Hyden Ali beyond Orixa had deranged the course of commerce in Bengal, some Bengal merchants, seeking new markets, succeeded in penetrating to the frontiers of Siberia, and that this fact suggested to the Russian Government an enterprise which was unsuccessfully undertaken in 1783. Availing themselves of the long line of water communication by the Volga to the Caspian Sea, they had sent an expedition from Astrakan for the purpose of seizing and occupying Astrabad at the southern point of the Caspian, with the object of ultimately penetrating from that point into India. Though the expedition had not succeeded, the design was not abandoned, and Mirabeau predicted that it might one day be accomplished, and that by gravely menacing English power in India, Russia might produce a complete change in the *European system of politics*; and among other consequences a close alliance of England and France to repress her growing power.[1] In 1791 the English minister mentions that a French adventurer named St. Ginier had lately arrived from France with particular recommendations from the Prince of Nassau. He proposed, in the event of a war between England and Russia, to go with a corps of 4,000 men from the northern extremity of the Caspian Sea, through Cashmere to Delhi, and from thence to attack the English

[1] Mirabeau's *Hist. secrète de la Cour de Berlin*, lettre xxix.

settlements in Bengal. 'This fine project,' wrote Whitworth, 'has been presented to the Empress by Monsieur Nassau, who, I must in justice to this country acknowledge, is the only man in it mad enough to think it practicable.'[1]

On March 28, 1791, a message was delivered to the English Parliament, stating that his Majesty's endeavours, in conjunction with his allies, to bring about a pacification between Russia and the Porte having failed, his Majesty deemed it necessary, for the purpose of adding weight to his representations, to make some further augmentation to his naval force, and on the following day Pitt moved an address, which was an echo of the message, and which pledged Parliament to give his Majesty the assistance he required. Pitt, in introducing it, dwelt much in generalities. A negotiation was in progress, and it could not yet be brought in detail before the House; but there were certain evident considerations which justified the necessity of the step which was to be taken. With perhaps something less than his usual felicity, he based his defence mainly on the interests of Prussia and on our obligation of defending her. Prussia, of all European Powers, was the one who could be the most useful ally to England. She had already done us a good service by breaking the French ascendency in Holland, and we were bound to her by a close defensive alliance, which was the best guarantee of the future security of Europe. The events

[1] Whitworth to Leeds, Feb. 25, March 25, April 8, 15, 1791. In July Whitworth sent home a circumstantial account of a plot to burn the English fleet at Portsmouth by means of several incendiaries of different nationalities who were in Russian pay. Two Irish Roman Catholics, named Keating and Swanton, who had been in the French service, and who were acquainted with England and with the town of Portsmouth, were to conduct the enterprise, and were at this time actually in London.—Whitworth to Grenville, July 5, 1791.

that were taking place were very dangerous to her. The Turkish Empire is of great weight in the general scale of European Powers, and if that Empire is diminished or destroyed, or even rendered unstable and precarious, the situation of Prussia would be seriously affected, and so far from concurring with England in protecting the Dutch frontier, and in general the existing European system, she would be obliged to concentrate all her efforts on the defence of her own frontiers. Nor would the danger and diminution of Prussia be the sole consequence. 'Would any man imagine that the aggrandisement of Russia would not materially affect the disposition of other Powers—that it might not produce an alteration in Poland, highly dangerous to Prussia? . . . If a powerful and ambitious neighbour were suffered to establish herself upon the very frontiers of Prussia, what safety was there for Poland; what safety for Denmark, or what for Sweden, when Prussia shall be no longer in a condition to assist them? The safety of all Europe might afterwards be endangered.' 'Many articles, the materials of manufacture, we received from Russia, but of these articles many could be obtained from other countries, from Poland for instance, and therefore we had a commercial interest in cultivating a trade with Poland, and preventing Russia from obtaining such a decided command of the articles we wanted as to give or withhold them at her pleasure.'[1]

These allusions to the danger of Poland, coupled with the fact that a few years later the final dismemberment of that unhappy kingdom was actually accomplished, have been sometimes cited as proofs of the prescience of Pitt, but there is not, I think, any sufficient reason for believing that the political security of Poland entered into the motives of his policy, though he did

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[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 52–55, 70–75.

undoubtedly consider the importance of her obtaining a vent for her commerce through the Black Sea. Nor is there the smallest ground for believing that if Oczakow had remained a Turkish fortress, Turkey would have had either the power or the disposition to prevent the final partition. A conflict between Russia and Prussia might no doubt have retarded it, but even then it would probably have been carried out at the peace, to furnish an indemnity for the expenses of the war.[1]

It soon, however, appeared that the Opposition were prepared to resist with all their energies the anti-Russian policy of Pitt, and that they were likely to find a large amount of support in the country. The interest in Oczakow and in the barren strip of land that lies between the Bog and the Dniester, has long since passed away; but these debates have even now a real importance, for they bring us to the source of that Eastern question which is still one of the gravest cares of Western statesmen. Fox and his followers objected in the first place to an armament based on the scanty knowledge which was furnished to the House. The King had the undoubted prerogative of declaring war; but Parliament had an equally undoubted check upon that prerogative in its right of withholding supplies. If, then, Parliament was asked to raise the navy to a war footing, it had surely a right to demand some fuller account than had been vouchsafed, of the proposals of Russia; some real means of judging how far a war which was manifestly contemplated was becoming necessary. All that was known was that England was insisting on the surrender by Russia of Oczakow and its district, and this demand appeared to Fox in the highest degree unjust and impolitic. It was unjust, because Russia had not been the aggressor in the war, and because in spite of

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[1] See the remarks of Lord Russell, *Life of Fox*, ii. 208.

her great successes she was understood to have consented to concessions which displayed her signal moderation. It was impolitic; for the only result of an expensive and dangerous war would be to alienate, perhaps for ever, a most valuable ally without obtaining any object in which England had a real interest. Russia was the natural ally of England. She was the one considerable maritime Power who was likely to help her. She was in a great part of Europe the most serious counterpoise to the ascendency of France. She was one of the nations with which England had the closest and most profitable connection. Though the commercial treaty had not been renewed, our annual exports to Russia were still about 400,000*l.*, and our annual imports from Russia about 2,500,000*l.* These imports consisted chiefly of implements of war, naval stores, and raw materials of manufacture, and above three-fourths of the Russian trade with England was carried on in English bottoms. It was impossible, therefore, for England to distress the trade of Russia without distressing herself in a much higher degree; and 'so far from wishing to go to war with her, we ought rather to wish her success in those quarters from which the Turks have always excluded us, at least for the last fifty years, and where the French enjoyed an almost complete monopoly.'

And what had England to gain by this policy? Of all the countries in Europe, Turkey was the one with which she had least connection. Of all the seas in the world the Black Sea was probably the only one to which English ships never penetrated. In what way could English interests, or English power, be affected by the acquisition by Russia of a fortress on the Dniester and a strip of barren land along the northern shore of the Black Sea? A Russian conquest of Constantinople was too distant and too doubtful to be seriously con-

templated. If it ever became imminent, it would be resisted by the Mediterranean Powers, whose interests would be affected much more directly than those of England. If it were ever accomplished, it would almost certainly be followed by a division of the Russian Empire, for all past history tended to prove the impossibility of a territory extending from Kamtchatka to the Mediterranean being held together under a single government.

And even if these predictions proved false, was it certain that Russian progress would be an evil to England? At present France and Spain were the two great maritime Powers of the Mediterranean. They had almost always been hostile to England, and in the last war they had effectually excluded her from that sea. Was, then, the intervention of a third naval Power, which was usually friendly to England and hostile to France, so great an evil? The assertion that we were bound by the spirit of our defensive alliance with Prussia to prevent Russia from obtaining Oczakow from the Turks, was denounced as in the highest degree dangerous and absurd. If defensive treaties were construed in such a manner, they would have all the evils of offensive ones, and they would involve us in every quarrel in Europe. We bound ourselves only to furnish assistance to Prussia if she were attacked. She had not been attacked. She was at perfect peace. She was absolutely unmenaced. It was doubtful whether the new acquisition of Russia could under any circumstances be injurious to her, and it was preposterous to maintain that it was the duty of England to prevent any other nation from acquiring any territory which might possibly, in some future war, be made use of against Prussia. That England, like other great nations, was bound to attend to the balance of power in Europe, was

very true; but could any reasonable man maintain that, if this balance was not deranged when Prussia obtained the great province of Silesia lying in the very heart of Europe, it was likely to be disturbed because Russia obtained a fortress on the Dniester, and a tract of almost uninhabited territory along the remote shores of the Euxine?

The conduct of Fox during the American war, and still more his speeches during the great French war, make it impossible to acquit him of the most serious charge of employing foreign politics and great national disasters for purely party purposes. He had, however, loyally supported the Government when they were appeasing the dissensions in Holland and when they were seeking redress for the Spanish outrage in Nootka Sound; and in his opposition to the present Russian policy of Pitt he faithfully represented the public opinion of England. Burke, who was now rapidly diverging from him on the question of the French Revolution, and who had a corresponding leaning towards Pitt, spoke vehemently and eloquently against the Russian armament. 'Considering the Turkish Empire as any part of the balance of power in Europe,' he said, 'was new.' The Turks were an essentially Asiatic people, who completely isolated themselves from European affairs, and 'the minister and the policy which should give them any weight in Europe would deserve all the bans and curses of posterity.' For his own part, he confessed that he had seen with horror the beautiful countries that bordered on the Danube given back by the Emperor to devastation and ruin. 'Are we,' he asked, 'now going to vote the blood and treasure of our countrymen to enforce similar cruel and inhuman policy?' The extension of the power and territory, and the direction of the energies of Russia towards the south, was not a danger, but a safeguard, to Prussia;

and if she ever conquered the Chersonese, its settlement would abundantly occupy her for ten or twenty years. It was impossible to say where the new policy might end. It might lead to an expenditure as great as the American war. The King of Prussia having thought fit to consider the Turks as useful to maintain his power, we might be asked to introduce them into Poland and the heart of Europe. That so wise a man as Pitt should endeavour on such slight and frivolous grounds to commit the country to a policy of unlimited adventure, sacrificing the friendship of one of our most useful allies, and casting to the wind the foreign policy of his own father, appeared to Burke the most extraordinary event that had taken place in Parliament since he had sat within its walls.

The question was brought before the House of Commons, in different forms, no less than four times. The Government majorities varied from ninety-four to eighty; but, large as they were, they were much below the normal figures in party divisions, and it was impossible to mistake the preponderance of ability and of independent opinion on the side of the Opposition. In the confidential letters of the ministers it was fully admitted that the armament and the prospect of a war with Russia were profoundly unpopular, and all the news that arrived from the Continent was discouraging. Prussia, alone of the three allies, was eager for a war, and it soon became plain that Holland would take no part in it.[1] Like England, she was governed, not by a despotic sovereign, but by the will of a free, commercial, and pacific people, and the Dutch ministers maintained that it could be of no possible consequence to Holland whether Oczakow belonged to the Russians or the

[1] Whitworth to Leeds, March 11, 1791; Leeds to Jackson, March 6, 1791.

Turks, and that it was absurd to contend that their defensive alliance with Prussia required them to join in an unprovoked attack upon Russia. Spain was now again on good terms with England, and Florida Blanca, who directed her policy, on being sounded by the English Envoy at Madrid, expressed a strong desire to see peace established between Russia and Turkey on the basis of the *status quo* as it existed before the war, and he directed the Spanish Minister at St. Petersburg to co-operate with the English Minister.[1] It soon appeared, however, that this co-operation did not extend beyond the expression of an opinion and a wish, and the Spanish Minister at St. Petersburg distinctly informed Whitworth that his master would take no part in any act of menace or hostility.[2] The Emperor, to the great disappointment of England, leaned strongly towards Russia, and there was much reason to fear that he would actively support her if Prussia entered into the field.[3] Sweden, whose co-operation was very important, leaned to the same side, and was determined not to reopen her quarrel with Russia;[4] while Denmark offered to mediate on the basis of some middle course described as 'a limited *status quo*.'[5] On the whole, with the exception of the Prussian Minister, Whitworth found no cordial co-operation among the ministers at St. Petersburg.[6] Lord Auckland, whose knowledge of the Continent was very great, wrote privately to Pitt, urging the dangers of a distant war; and the Dutch admiral, Kinsbergen, who was well acquainted with Oczakow and its territory, made a strong representation of the inadequacy of the proposed motive for war. Sebastopol, he said, was a serious danger to

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1 Leeds to Whitworth, Dec. 24, 1790.

2 Whitworth to Leeds, Jan. 14, 1791.

3 Ibid. April 8, 1791.

4 Ibid. March 25, 1791.

5 Ibid. April 8, 1791.

6 Ibid. Feb. 25, 1791.

Turkey, and an active admiral might easily burn Constantinople by a sudden attack from that port; but Oczakow had but little real importance. Pitt appears to have been much struck by this opinion, and it contributed to shake his confidence in his policy.[1]

The situation was very perplexing, for England was already deeply committed. On March 27, the day before the King's message to Parliament had been delivered, the Duke of Leeds wrote to Whitworth informing him officially that Great Britain and Prussia had resolved upon an immediate interference, and directing him to present an ultimatum to the Russian Government and to insist upon an answer within ten days. In this ultimatum, the two Courts state the gratification with which they had seen the principle of the *status quo* accepted as the basis of pacification in the peace between Austria and Turkey, and in the peace between Russia and Sweden, and they added that any accession of territory by Russia on the side of Turkey 'must essentially diminish the future security of the Turkish Empire, and must be attended with consequences highly detrimental to the interests of the two Courts and the future permanence of tranquillity in Europe.'[2]

Pitt, however, saw quickly and clearly that the country was against him, and he resolved to recede. The Duke of Leeds, who was most closely identified with the recent policy, retired from office;[3] Lord Grenville, the Secretary for the Home Department, who had been originally the only minister in the Cabinet opposed to sending a fleet to the Baltic, was transferred

[1] *Auckland Correspondence*, ii. 381–383. See, too, pp. 387, 388.

[2] Leeds to Whitworth, March 27, 1791.

[3] His *Political Memoranda*, edited by Mr. Oscar Browning, have been published by the Camden Society, and they contain several interesting particulars of the deliberations of the ministers on this question.

to the Foreign Office; and Dundas, though still retaining the Presidency of the Indian Board, became Home Secretary. A messenger, hastily despatched to St. Petersburg, was in time to prevent Whitworth from laying the ultimatum before the Empress; and Grenville instructed Ewart to inform the Prussian ministers that although the strict *status quo* still seemed to the English Cabinet the most durable basis of pacification, the manner in which the recent Address had been received in Parliament and in the country, had convinced them that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to attain it. The King, desirous to meet the wishes of his people, wished to find a middle term, which might attain the great object of the allies, 'the future security of Turkey, and the maintenance of general and permanent tranquillity.' The Danish proposition seemed to offer such an opening, and Spain had been making overtures in the same line, and appeared inclined, if peace could be established on some middle term, to join in guaranteeing the remaining dominions of the Porte.[1]

Pitt himself, in a letter to Ewart, which was intended to be brought before the Prussian ministers, stated very forcibly and frankly the motives of his conduct. 'No one,' he wrote, 'could be more eagerly bent than I was on a steady adherence to the line which we had at first proposed, of going all lengths to enforce the terms of the strict *status quo*; and I am still as much persuaded as ever that if we could have carried the support of the country with us, the risk and expense of the struggle, even if Russia had not submitted without a struggle, would not have been more than the object was worth. But, notwithstanding this was my own fixed opinion, I saw with certainty in a very few days after

[1] Grenville to Ewart, April 20, 1791.

the subject was first discussed in Parliament, that the prospect of obtaining a support sufficient to carry it through with vigour and effect was absolutely desperate. . . . From what I know of the sentiments of the greatest part of the majority and of many of the warmest friends of Government, I am sure that if, persisting in the line of the *status quo*, we were to come to the point of actually calling for supplies to support the war, and were to state, as would then be indispensable, the precise ground on which it arose, we should either not carry such a question, or carry it only by so weak a division as would nearly amount to a defeat. . . . The obvious effect of our persisting would have been to risk the existence of the present Government, and with it the whole of our system both at home and abroad. The personal part of this consideration it would have been our duty to overlook, but . . . the overthrow of our system here . . . must have shaken the whole of our system abroad. It is not difficult to foresee what must have been the consequence to Prussia of a change effected by an opposition to the very measures taken in concert with that Court, and resting on the avowed ground of our present system of alliance. . . . My great object is that you should be able to satisfy the King of Prussia of the strong necessity under which we have acted, and that we really had no other choice, with a view either to his interests or to those which we are most bound to consult at home.'[1]

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 115, 116. Lord Malmesbury, it is true, in a letter to the Duke of Portland gives a somewhat different view of the matter. He says: 'It appears very clear to me, from some confidential communications which were made to me, that Lord Grenville was the cause of Mr. Pitt's giving way, and that he acted, not from the reason which was given, the nation's being against it, but from its being his fixed opinion that we should not interfere at all in the events of the Continent' (*Diaries and Correspondence of Lord Malmesbury*,

The determination of the English Government was received at Berlin with regret, but more graciously than might perhaps have been expected. The King of Prussia declared himself to be much impressed with the attitude of English public opinion, but he was extremely desirous that if the Baltic expedition was postponed, England should at least send a squadron to the Black Sea.[1] Whitworth was, perhaps, not a very skilful; certainly at this time not a conciliatory or a successful diplomatist; and his relations with the Court of St. Petersburg were very strained. The Government resolved, without removing or superseding him, to send out a new envoy. Fawkener was accordingly sent first to Berlin and then to St. Petersburg, to endeavour to negotiate a peace. He was instructed to abstain from all language of menace, but to attempt to induce the Empress to accept some one of several proposed modifications of the original demand. It was suggested that the Oczakow district should be made neutral and a barrier between Russia and Turkey; or that it should be added to Russia on the condition that no towns or fortresses should be established, and that it should remain uninhabited; or that the cession should be confined to some boundary short of the Dniester, and accompanied with the condition that the fortress of Oczakow should be demolished and that no new fort should be raised; or, finally, that the cession should be unrestricted except by the condition that it should not extend to, or interfere with, the navigation of the Dniester.

It was soon found, however, that Catherine would listen to no such restriction, and everything contributed

ii. 441). The *Political Memoranda*, however, of the Duke of Leeds show that Pitt, in opposition to Lord Grenville, cordially approved of sending a fleet to the Baltic, but was alarmed at the unpopularity of the measure.

[1] Ewart to Grenville, April 30, 1791; Fawkener to Grenville, May 10, 1791.

to encourage her. The definite Peace of Sistova, between the Emperor and Turkey, had not yet been signed; and at this time the Emperor was strongly supporting Russia. He had just broken off the Congress by his unexpected demand for old Orsova and a Croatian frontier, and there was a strong probability that he would renew the war. On the other hand, the Turks were evidently completely broken, and in July 1791 the Russians won two more important victories. The attitude of Sweden, Denmark, and Holland was exceedingly encouraging to the Empress, and the news of the late proceedings in England and of the abrupt withdrawal of the intended ultimatum convinced her that there was little serious danger from that quarter.

For many years before the period with which we are now concerned, Catherine had professed a kind of romantic enthusiasm for Fox. She had placed his bust in her palace between the busts of Demosthenes and Cicero, and she was extremely desirous of seeing him again at the head of affairs.[1] Fox appears to have to a considerable extent reciprocated the admiration, and a very grave charge relating to the negotiations about Oczakow was afterwards brought against him by Burke, in a letter to the Duke of Portland which was published without the consent of the writer. Burke has stated that Fox at this time, 'without the knowledge and participation of any one person in the House of Commons with whom he was bound by every party principle, in matters of delicacy and importance, confidentially to communicate, thought proper to send Mr. Adair as his representative and with his cipher to St. Petersburg, there to frustrate the objects for which the minister from the Crown was authorised to treat;' and that 'he succeeded in this, his design, and did actually frustrate

[1] Malmesbury's *Correspondence*, i. 325; Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 120.

the King's minister in some of the objects of his negotiation.'[1]

This charge was reiterated some years later by Bishop Tomline, who stated that he had found its accuracy 'attested by authentic documents among Mr. Pitt's papers.'[2] It was, however, never substantiated, and Adair, whose character was beyond all suspicion, has positively denied it, and has at the same time clearly explained how it may have arisen. It is quite true that in the May of 1791 he made a journey to St. Petersburg; that he received some letters of introduction from Fox; that Fox requested him to send back to England all the news that he could gather, and that he recommended him, as his letters were likely to be opened, to employ a cipher which had been used by Burgoyne in the American war. But it is also true that Adair's journey was undertaken entirely of his own free will and without any prompting from Fox; and that Fox charged him with no message whatever. Adair, not very judiciously, held conversations with Russian Ministers before the pending dispute had been settled, on the advantages of a future Anglo-Russian alliance, but he spoke to them altogether from himself, and without any instructions from Fox, and did not even mention these conversations to Fox upon his return.[3] Nor had they any of the importance that has been ascribed to them. The Empress was, no doubt, glad to display her sympathies by showing marked favour to the friend of Fox,[4] but before Fawkener had left England she had received from her ambassador in London full information about the attitude and sentiments of the Opposition, about the tendencies of English

[1] 'Observations on the conduct of the Minority,' Burke's *Works*, vii. 227.

[2] Tomline's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 309.

[3] See the letter of Sir Robert Adair in Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 383-387.

[4] See Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 120.

public opinion, and about the great difficulties the English Minister was likely to encounter in Parliament if he entered into war.[1]

The truth is that everything, as the British envoy mournfully said, seemed at this time to conspire against the plans of the British Government. 'The success with which the [Russian] campaign has opened; the vigorous measures which appear to be carrying on, on the other side of the Danube and of the river Cuban; the perfect concert with which this Court has acted with that of Vienna in a scene of the greatest duplicity; the nature of the demands made by the Emperor; the breaking up of the Congress and the consequent recommencement of hostilities, the blame of which will be thrown chiefly upon the Turks; the rancorous aversion of the Empress to the King of Prussia; her dislike and jealousy of England; . . . her hope of perhaps bringing about a change in his Majesty's administration,' were all reasons for despondency.[2] England, at last, reduced her terms to merely asking a promise from Russia that she would not molest the navigation of the Dniester; but in the meantime the Russians opened a direct negotiation with the Porte, and an agreement was made on the basis of the entire cession of Oczakow and its district to the Dniester, in full sovereignty, with a renewal of former treaties. No stipulation was made in the treaty about the navigation of the Dniester, but the Empress promised of her own free will that she would not interfere with it. The preliminaries of this peace were signed at Galatz on August 11. The definitive peace was concluded at Jassy on January 9, 1792.

The death of Potemkin, which took place near Jassy, rather more than two months before the definitive

[1] Whitworth to Grenville, May 2, 1791.
[2] Fawkener to Grenville, July 5, 1791.

peace, threw a dark shadow over the mind of Catherine, but politically her triumph was very great. She had completely baffled both England and Prussia, had made peace on her own terms, and had made it without the intervention of any foreign Power. This was the first great failure in the administration of Pitt, and it broke the spell of a long course of brilliant and uninterrupted triumphs. Russia was confirmed in her ascendency on the Euxine; neither Turkey, nor Sweden, nor the Emperor were drawn into the defensive system; and the alliance between England and Prussia, on which Pitt had placed his chief hope for the security of Europe, came practically to an end. There was no open breach, but confidence and co-operation disappeared. The Prussian King and Ministers were extremely discontented at the course which European politics had lately taken. Though the youngest of the Great Powers, Prussia, they said, had in the last few years three times interposed, at serious risk and by considerable military demonstrations, to maintain the equilibrium of Europe. She had put down the revolution in Holland at the risk of a war with France. She had enforced by threats the neutrality of Denmark at the risk of a war with Russia. She had produced a peace between the Emperor and Turkey by massing her troops on the Austrian frontier. On each of these occasions a great service had been rendered, and on each of them heavy expenses had been incurred, yet Prussia had gained absolutely nothing for herself. England was accused at Berlin of having defeated the Prussian projects for acquiring Dantzig and Thorn and for expelling Austria from Galicia and from Flanders, and the final triumph of Russia was mainly due to the attitude of English parties and of the English Government. For some months Prussia and Austria had been gravitating towards each other. English diplomacy, desiring to isolate Russia, had encouraged

the tendency, and the result was a close alliance which produced new political combinations in which England had no part, and, among other consequences, led to the invasion of France.

It is difficult even now to say whether the Ministry of Pitt can be reasonably blamed on account of the somewhat humiliating rebuff which it had experienced. In the long and intricate course of foreign policy which I have described, and which extended far beyond the terms of a defensive alliance, more than one step was taken of which the expediency may be contested; but in the last stage, Pitt seems to me to have acted the part of a wise and courageous statesman in promptly recognising and frankly acknowledging the facts of the case. The collapse of Turkish resistance, the hostile attitude of the Emperor, and the decisive condemnation by English public opinion of a war for the recovery of Oczakow, made such a policy extremely dangerous; and, considering the dispositions and designs of Prussia, a war with Russia would have almost certainly extended to Austria and Poland. Subsequent events have not shown that Oczakow possessed such European importance as to justify these risks; and though the close alliance between England and Prussia had been on the whole successful, it had already led to great dangers, and would probably have led to still greater in the following year. The French Revolution was now the main fact which began to colour and direct all the policy of Europe, and in little more than a year after the signature of the Peace of Jassy it involved England in a struggle which was the most desperate and dangerous in her whole history. It can scarcely be doubted that the conditions of that struggle would have been materially, perhaps fatally, modified if the events of 1793 had found England already trammelled and exhausted by a European war.

CHAPTER XVIII.

There are no pages in history more instructive, and there are few which are more humiliating and depressing, than those which record the judgments of great thinkers and politicians on the verge of the changes that have most profoundly affected the destiny of mankind. The triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire, and the great religious reformation of the sixteenth century, had both been prepared by influences that had interacted and co-operated through many generations, yet each of them appears to have fallen upon the governing classes of Europe almost as a surprise. The French Revolution, at which we are now arrived, was only inferior to these in its magnitude and its significance, and I propose to devote the present chapter to a brief examination of the causes that produced it, the degree in which it was predicted, and the manner in which it was judged. Such an examination can hardly be regarded altogether as a digression, for the French Revolution influenced English history in the latter years of the eighteenth century more profoundly than any other single event. It gave a completely new direction and character to the Ministry of Pitt; it determined absolutely, for nearly a generation, the course of English foreign policy; and while it was itself largely influenced by political speculations of English origin, it in its turn reacted most powerfully on the internal policy, and on the modes of political thought prevailing in England.

Of its antecedents or causes the literary and philo-

sophical were those which attracted most attention. There is no more striking picture in intellectual history than is furnished by that great literature which arose amid the profound political and moral decrepitude of the reign of Lewis XV., filling Europe with its splendour and its influence; and it was impossible for the most superficial observer to overlook the immense difference of tendency and character that separated it from the French literature of the seventeenth century. A few writers of the earlier period were, no doubt, partial exceptions. The 'Method' of Descartes, the 'Telemachus' of Fénelon, above all the critical writings of Bayle, threw out ideas which appeared to belong to a later age, but in general there runs through the great French literature of the seventeenth century a profound content with the existing order in Church and State, an entire absence of the spirit of disquiet, scepticism, and innovation that leads to organic change. But from the death of Lewis XIV. a complete change of spirit may be detected. The mingled austerity and hypocrisy of the latter days of Lewis XIV. had produced a reaction very similar to that which followed the Commonwealth in England; but it was supported by men of far higher intellect and of far loftier aims. At this time Voltaire began that wonderful career, unparalleled in its brilliancy and versatility, almost unparalleled in the deep contrasts of its good and evil. The 'Œdipus,' which was his first tragedy, was represented in 1718, and it contained two famous lines which clearly foreshadowed the mission of his life.[1] The 'Epistle to Urania,' which was written, though not published, before Voltaire visited England, already expressed in the clearest and fullest form both his total disbelief in the Christian faith and his firm and genuine theism. The 'Persian Letters' of Mon-

[1] 'Nos prêtres ne sont pas ce qu'un vain peuple pense,
Notre crédulité fait toute leur science.'

tesquieu, which were published in 1721, contained the germ of a great part of the characteristic speculation of the century, and the remarkable junction of the French and English intellect which took place in the next few years, and which was admirably represented by Voltaire's 'Letters on the English,' strengthened the new tendencies. Montesquieu spent two and Voltaire nearly three years in England, and the effects of these visits may be traced through the whole of their later lives. The philosophies of Bacon, Newton, and Locke; the writings of the English deists; English notions of liberty; English canons of criticism, were soon made familiar to the French public, and up to the very eve of the Revolution nearly all the best works of English literature were translated and studied.

It was soon seen that men of letters were rising to a new influence and importance in France, but until the middle of the century had passed they cannot be said to have been openly and systematically hostile to the Church. Religious scepticism had, indeed, already spread widely through Paris society.[1] A Church in which Dubois was a cardinal, and was unanimously elected by the Bishops president of their general assembly,[2] neither deserved nor obtained respect, and in all the many departments of knowledge that were now explored a new spirit of independence was displayed, but as yet literary activity in France was turned chiefly to imaginative literature or to departments of serious literature very remote from theological or political revolution. The two great works of Montesquieu—'The Causes of the Decline of the Roman Republic,' which appeared in 1734, and 'The Spirit of the Laws,' which appeared in 1748—were books to teach the teachers, but certainly not to inflame the passions of men; and

[1] Rocquain, *L'Esprit Révolutionnaire avant la Révolution*, pp. 33, 34.
[2] Ibid.

most of the writings of Voltaire during the same period could have given little or no legitimate offence. In addition to his 'Letters on the English,' he produced during these years his 'Henriade' and several of his other poems, several of his noblest dramas, his popular exposition of the philosophy of Newton, and his 'History of Charles XII.,' and at this time also he composed, wholly or in part, though he did not yet publish, his 'History of Lewis XIV.,' his 'History of Manners,' and that shameful work of genius, his 'Pucelle.' During the fifteen fruitful and happy years from 1734 to 1749, which he spent chiefly at Cirey with Madame du Chatelet, he was largely occupied with pursuits that were exceedingly remote from revolution. One of his great objects was to introduce into France the English habit of burying the dead outside the limits of towns and away from centres of population. Another was to diffuse the practice of inoculation. He wrote a scientific memoir on the nature of fire, and another on the motive forces, and he occupied himself keenly with geometry, and with a comparison of the philosophies of Descartes, Newton, Leibnitz, and Euler.[1]

He had already found how impossible it was for a man of letters to live unmolested in France. Immediately after the death of Lewis XIV. he had been confined for nearly eleven months in the Bastille on a false charge of having written a satire on the memory of that prince. In 1725, having attempted to resent an outrageous insult by the Chevalier de Rohan Chabot, he was again arbitrarily imprisoned and then exiled from France. On his return he was refused permission to print his tragedy on 'The Death of Cæsar,' because he had treated Brutus with respect. He was exiled from Paris because in his 'Elegy on the Death of

[1] Saigey, *La Physique de Voltaire*.

Lecouvreur,' he had censured the bigotry which, on account of her profession, denied that great actress Christian burial. His 'Letters on the English,' though a most temperate and truthful description of the tendencies of English thought and character, were burnt by the public executioner. His 'History of Charles XII.' was printed by permission, but the permission was afterwards withdrawn, and he was obliged to go to Holland to print his 'Elements of the Philosophy of Newton,' as the French Government refused permission to print a work which was opposed to the system of Descartes. The only liberty for which he at this time really cared was a very moderate amount of liberty of thought and writing, and he was extremely anxious to place himself under the protection and patronage of the Court. In consequence of the opera ballet of 'The Princess of Navarre,' which was played before the King, and through the favour of Madame de Pompadour, he for a time succeeded; he was made Gentleman of the Court and historiographer to the King, and was shortly after elected to a seat in the French Academy, purchasing his success by a shameful profession of his attachment to the Catholic faith and to the Jesuits. He was profuse in his flatteries to the King and the King's mistresses, and he dedicated his 'Tragedy of Mahomet' to Pope Benedict XIV., and received from the Pope a complimentary letter.

He soon, however, fell into disfavour with the French Court. Voltaire indeed could flatter grossly; he could lie shamelessly; he had no scruples in baffling tyrannical laws by disavowing or denying his works, and in professing opinions which he did not hold, with all the solemnities of a religion which he heartily despised; but a life of continued hypocrisy and reticence was impossible to his nature. To think and write freely; to utter every thought that passed through the most fertile,

brilliant, petulant, and capricious of human brains, was with him an imperative need, and he soon found that he could only attain it in a foreign land. After his journey to Berlin and his famous quarrel with Frederick, he had a long period of hesitation, but he at last resolved to retire to Switzerland. He was then past sixty, but his energies were as powerful and his intellect was as youthful and as buoyant as when he had visited England. He had now wealth and a real independence, and, casting aside nearly all other pleasures and ambitions, he threw himself into the task of his life with an industry and a fertility that have scarcely ever been equalled. To this period belong many of those works which are among the most enduring monuments of French literature. To this period belong the noble efforts in favour of the family of the murdered Calas, and of many other victims of ecclesiastical or judicial persecution, which constitute the chief moral glory of his life;[1] and to this period also belong his systematic and persistent attacks upon the Christian faith. He assailed it with the most fiery impetuosity for nearly twenty years; sometimes by serious argument and in works of considerable value, but chiefly by showers of anonymous pamphlets, lampoons, dialogues, parodies, or letters, which were printed for the most part under false names and in foreign printing presses, but were eagerly bought and read throughout France. At the same time he maintained a vast correspondence with the leading writers in Paris, and it was his main object to combine them in a great and systematic attempt to sap the creed which he believed to be the root of the superstition and the intolerance of France.

French literature had never been so brilliant as in the second half of the eighteenth century. Buffon,

[1] See a very full and excellent account of these efforts in Mr. Parton's *Life of Voltaire*, ii. 352–407.

Diderot, D'Alembert, Rousseau, Duclos, Condillac, Helvétius, Holbach, Raynal, Condorcet, Mably, and many others adorned it, and the 'Encyclopædia,' which was begun in 1751 under the direction of Diderot, became the focus of an intellectual influence which has rarely been equalled. The name and idea were taken from a work published by Ephraim Chambers, in Dublin in 1728. A noble preliminary discourse was written by D'Alembert; and all the best pens in France were enlisted in the enterprise, which was constantly encouraged and largely assisted by Voltaire. Twice it was suppressed by authority, but the interdict was again raised. Popular favour now ran with an irresistible force in favour of the philosophers, and the work was brought to its conclusion in 1771.

This is not the place to estimate the immense service rendered by the French writers of this time to physical science, to jurisprudence, to political economy, to nearly every branch of human knowledge. It is sufficient here to mention that almost the whole of this literature was opposed to the recognised religion of the country, though the writers differed greatly both in the degree of their hostility and in their own positive opinions. Voltaire and Rousseau were firm believers in the truths of natural religion, and Voltaire, while incessantly attacking revealed religion with every weapon of argument, eloquence, invective, ridicule, and buffoonery, has left many admirable pages in defence of the existence of God, the freedom of the will, the eternal distinction between right and wrong, and the absolute necessity of religious belief to the well-being of society. But Holbach, Diderot, and their followers were simple atheists, and atheism had never been advocated so boldly or unequivocally as in France between 1758 and 1776. The treatise of Helvétius on 'Mind,' which appeared in 1758, and which traced the whole superiority of man

over the animals to the structure of the human hand, and the 'System of Nature' by Holbach, which appeared in 1770, and which was perhaps the most elaborate defence of atheism ever published, were welcomed with enthusiasm; a system of metaphysics which reduced all knowledge to the impressions of the senses, and a passion for physical science which directed attention mainly to the external world, strengthened the tendency, and there is overwhelming evidence that at the eve of the Revolution almost all the guiding intellects and the immense majority of the educated classes of France, however they might be divided on the question of atheism or deism, were total disbelievers in the Church which was alone recognised by law, and which was endowed with vast power, privileges, and wealth. There were still, indeed, men of splendid talents in its ranks, but they were men who had embraced or been forced into the ecclesiastical profession as a mere lucrative calling, and were utterly indifferent to its doctrines. Such a man was Talleyrand, the Bishop of Autun, and such were the Abbé St. Pierre, the Abbé Raynal, the Abbé de Condillac, the Abbé Morellet, the Abbé Siéyès, the Abbé Deschamps. But since the destruction of Jansenism, all the independent characters, and all the honest intellect of France, seemed alienated from the Christian faith. Fashion, which in no other country was so powerful, was on the same side. The most brilliant *salons* of Paris, almost the whole body of the Court aristocracy,[1] a great part even of the higher clergy,[2] had caught the prevailing tone. Among the poorer aristocracy, who were thinly scattered over the country districts, and especially among the legal or parliamentary nobility, there might still be found a

[1] See the striking and vivid picture in the *Mémoires de Ségur*, i. 26-28; ii. 53-57.

[2] Taine, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 381-384.

strong attachment to the old decorous manners, and to the forms of old belief, and there was still much real and sober religious life among the country curés; but the utter absence of any considerable literary effort, either serious or satirical, to stem the tide, showed how completely the philosophical party had conquered or absorbed the intellect of France. The Desfontaines, the Frérons, the Palisots, the Linguets, the La Beaumelles, the Bergiers, the 'Année littéraire' and the 'Journal de Trévoux' had scarcely any real influence upon opinion, and all the efforts of the enemies of the philosophers have been unable to galvanise them into any semblance of reputation.

The significance of these facts is very great, but it is much increased when we remember that the Church which was so discredited, so corrupt, and at the same time so intellectually despicable, was a persecuting Church connected with a persecuting government. I have elsewhere described the atrocious provisions of the law that was made in 1724 against the French Protestants, and four years later Fleury issued a declaration condemning to prison or to the galleys anyone who printed anything in France contrary to papal bulls.[1] In the full blaze of the civilisation of the eighteenth century, hundreds of French Protestants were condemned to the galleys or to long periods of imprisonment for the crime of attending their religious worship; women were flogged; children were torn from their parents, and more than one Protestant pastor was executed.[2] In 1757 a new edict was issued threatening with death anyone who wrote, printed, or sold any work attacking

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[1] Vol. i. p. 337. Rocquain, *L'Esprit Révolutionnaire avant la Révolution*, p. 49.

[2] Vol. i. pp. 336–338; Taine, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 78–81; Sismondi, *Hist. des Français*, xx. 178.

religion or the royal authority.[1] Up to the period of the Révolution nothing could be legally printed in France, and no book could be imported into France without Government authorisation, and in 1789 there were no less than 169 persons employed in the censorship of books.[2] The severities of the Government were exercised not only against books on religion, or government, or finance, but even against books relating to the most abstruse branches of physics and metaphysics.[3] One of Voltaire's printers was condemned to nine years in the galleys, and eight printers and binders employed in the same printing office were condemned to the pillory and three years of banishment.[4] During the whole of the reign of Lewis XV. there was scarcely a work of importance which was not burnt or suppressed, while the greater number of the writers who were at this time the special and almost the only glory of France, were imprisoned, banished, or fined.

Their works, however, circulated far and wide, and in the early years of Lewis XVI. a more liberal administration and the overwhelming pressure of public opinion broke down the persecution. Still the toleration was precarious, intermittent, and unsanctioned by law, and the Church was openly hostile to it. In 1770 the whole body of the French bishops drew up a memoir to the King 'on the dangerous consequences of liberty of thinking and printing.'[5] In 1780 they presented a new memoir protesting against the admission of Protestants to public employments, and against any relaxation of the laws against heresy, and at the same time strenuously demanding an increased severity against anti-Christian writings.[6] Up

[1] Rocquain, p. 204.

[2] Granier de Cassagnac, *Causes de la Révolution*, i. 28, 29.

[3] See the list of condemned books in Granier de Cassagnac, i. 32–34. See, too, Buckle's *Hist. of Civilisation*, i. 671–682.

[4] Parton's *Life of Voltaire*, ii. 299.

[5] Roquain, p. 275.

[6] Ibid. pp. 381–383.

to the very eve of the French Revolution the marriages of French Protestants were invalid, and unrecognised by law; and when this scandalous abuse was at last abolished in 1788 by Brienne, his measure giving non-Catholics the rights of citizenship in France was carried with difficulty through the Parliaments, in the face of a furious opposition raised by an important section of the French clergy.[1]

The spirit of reform had twice appeared in France associated with strong positive Christian beliefs, and with a code of severe and even austere morality, and twice by the assistance of the State the French Church had succeeded in crushing it. She had driven from the land the Huguenots, who represented the very flower of the industrial population. She had humbled and suppressed the Jansenists, who included the finest intellects and purest characters within her pale. A new enemy was now at her doors. The very foundations of Christian and even Theistic belief were giving way, and the code of morals was by no means untouched. The hostility between the intellectual classes and the clergy, the collision between legal authorities and public opinion, and the almost total destruction of Catholic belief among educated Frenchmen, had a real and a considerable part in preparing the Revolution. All respect and reverence had ebbed away from one of the great institutions of the country. The empire of authority, prescription, and tradition over the minds of men was broken, and it became easy, when the storm of Revolution began, to turn the movement against Church property.

At the same time, if the religious movement had stood alone, it is exceedingly improbable that it would have led to any sanguinary convulsion. History furnishes us with several examples of periods of great re-

[1] Chérest, *La Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, i. 382–395.

ligious decadence, and it abundantly shows that such convulsions are by no means their natural accompaniments. The evils to be feared at such a time are of another kind—the decline of morals when the dogmas with which they had been associated are abandoned, a relaxation of energy, a material, selfish, epicurean cast both of thought and character. The purest and noblest blood has been shed like water in connection with religious beliefs; but it has not been shed by the sceptic, but by the believer. Mohammedan fanaticism, the Crusades, the massacres of the Albigenses and of St. Bartholomew, the long religious wars that desolated Europe, the savage persecutions of Protestants by Catholics, of Catholics by Protestants, and of witches by both, were due to a spirit which was very different from that of Voltaire. Regicide has found its strongest advocates in the writings of Jesuit theologians, and the fanaticism and heroism of revolt have never been more fully displayed than among the Huguenots of France, the Anabaptists of Germany, and the Covenanters of Scotland. But there is certainly no natural or necessary affinity between freethinking in religion, and democracy in politics. In England, Hobbes, who was the first very considerable freethinker, constructed the political philosophy which is beyond all others favourable to despotism. Bolingbroke was the most brilliant leader of the Tory party. Hume was the best exponent of the Tory view of English history, and all his sympathies were with a benevolent despotism. Gibbon, as a quiet Tory member, steadily supported the American policy of North; and when the French Revolution broke out, his judgment of it was precisely similar to that of Burke. In France, Bayle wrote with horror of the democratic and seditious principles disseminated among French Huguenots, and there is no reason to believe that the great writers of the period of the 'Encyclopædia' were ani-

mated by a different spirit. Two only, Grimm and Raynal, survived till the Revolution. The first left France in disgust. The second wrote an eloquent letter, denouncing with the utmost detestation the events that were occurring. Of all the great French writers of the eighteenth century, Rousseau had the largest influence on the Revolution, and among those writers Rousseau was in religious matters one of the most conservative.

Voltaire in his theory of government was essentially monarchical. In a writer who was so voluminous, and at the same time so infinitely mobile and various, a perfect consistency cannot be expected; but in spite of occasional and warm eulogies of the constitutions of England, Holland, and Geneva, this aspect of his teaching is too evident to be overlooked. His admiration of the English Constitution was mainly based upon the freedom of thought and writing which it secured, and he seems to have been very slightly impressed with its Parliament. The whole tendency of his mind was to favour administrative reform rather than organic change. His political writings display most eminently the admirable good sense and moderation of opinion, and the no less admirable good nature and humanity, which amid all his caprices, petulances, and meannesses, never wholly abandoned him; but they are quite as remarkable for what they omit, as for what they contain. He desired a complete abolition of the laws restricting or destroying the liberty of the press, of the laws against witches, and of the laws of religious persecution. It might not, he acknowledged, be prudent or necessary to admit Protestants to municipal or other dignities, or to permit them to build public churches; but their marriages should be fully legal; they should be as free as other citizens in educating their children, and inheriting property, and as long as they remained peaceful subjects, they should enjoy the full protection of the law. The

penal code he desired to see thoroughly reformed. He advocated the abolition of torture, of mutilation, of all forms of agonising or prolonged death, and also a great restriction in the number of capital offences. He wished the extravagant penalties which French law decreed against sacrilege to be mitigated, and the law which insulted the body, and confiscated the property of the suicide, to be repealed. No one wrote better on the folly of punishing murder and robbery by the same capital penalty, and thus making it the direct interest of the robber to assassinate his victim; on the barbarity of making confiscation of goods an element of punishment, and thus beggaring the children for the crime of the father; on the injustice of keeping accused persons before their trial in solitary confinement, and restricting their right of examining their witnesses; on the evils of the excessive intricacy and diversity of French civil law, which varied in almost every province; on the necessity of improving the administration and condition of the prisons. Turning to other subjects, he wished to abolish the sale of offices, to diminish the taxes on articles of first necessity, to equalise taxation, to repeal the restrictions on the internal commerce of corn, to put an end to the enforced idleness of many Church holidays, to restrict the power of the priests in prescribing degrading penances, and excessive abstinences. He wrote with great fervour against the serfdom which still lingered in Franche-Comté, and some other parts of France. He defended the right of the serfs in the Jura against their monastic oppressors, and he welcomed with enthusiasm the administration and the reforms of Turgot.

His keen and luminous intellect judged with admirable precision most of the popular delusions of his time. He exposed with great force the common error which confounds all wealth with the precious metals. He

wrote against sumptuary laws. He refuted Rousseau's doctrine of the evil of all luxury. He had little sympathy with the prevailing tendency to aggrandise immeasurably the functions of the State, and he protested against the wild notions of equality that were coming into fashion. What should be aimed at, he wrote, is not 'the absurd and impossible equality that would confound the servant and the master, the workman and the magistrate, the pleader and the judge. It is rather equality such as exists in Switzerland, where every citizen depends only on the law, which maintains the liberty of the weak against the ambition of the strong.' 'Men are essentially equal, but they are intended to play different parts on the stage of Life.' At the same time, while strongly maintaining the necessity and expediency of different orders and ranks, he wrote with admirable wisdom about the excessive division of classes that prevailed both in France and Germany.[1] 'A merchant hears his profession so often spoken of with contempt that he is foolish enough to blush for it himself. Yet who is the more useful to the State—a well-powdered nobleman who knows exactly when the King rises and when he goes to bed, and who gives himself airs of grandeur while playing the part of a slave in the antechamber of a minister, or a merchant who enriches his country, sends his orders to India and Egypt, and contributes to the happiness of the world?' He spoke

[1] The division of classes was, however, gradually diminishing even in France. Necker writes on the subject: 'Indiquons encore les mésalliances comme une altération aux vieilles habitudes et aux préjugés, si l'on veut, qui servoient à entretenir l'éclat de la noblesse. Ces mésalliances furent multipliées à l'excès sous le règne de Louis XV., et l'amour de l'argent mit en relation de consanguinité la haute noblesse et les hommes à grande fortune, la haute noblesse et la *haute finance*; car ce dernier nom fut alors inventé par les gens de la cour afin d'orner un peu leurs nouveaux parens.'—Necker, 'Sur la Révolution,' *Œuvres*, ix. 125.

with admiration of the custom in England—a custom, which, he says, was passing too much out of fashion—of younger sons of the nobility going into commerce.[1] He mentions that when Lord Townshend was Minister of the Crown, he had a brother who was a merchant in the City, and that, while Lord Oxford was governing England, his brother lived and died contentedly as a factor at Aleppo, and he predicted in a few admirable sentences the necessary growth of the commercial classes. 'The gains of commerce having increased, and the revenues from public offices having diminished in real value, there is less wealth than formerly among the great, and more among the middle class, and this in itself diminishes the distance between men. There was once no resource for the small except to serve the great. Now industry has opened a thousand ways which were not known a hundred years ago.'[2]

And in perfect accordance with these ways of judging the present, were his views about the past. No previous writer can compare with him in the wideness and justness of his conception of history, and even now no historian can read without profit his essays on the subject. No one before had so strongly urged that history should not be treated as a collection of pictures or anecdotes relating to Courts and battles, but should be made a record and explanation of the true development of nations, of the causes of their growth and decay, of their characteristic virtues and vices, of the changes that pass over their laws, customs, opinions, social and economical conditions, and over the relative importance and well-being of their different classes.

Many of these views have so completely triumphed that they have become commonplace, but it is difficult

[1] See his 'Lettres sur la Commerce;' *Œuvres de Voltaire*, xxiv. 44, 45.

[2] *Siècle de Louis XIV.* ch. xxx.

to over-estimate the services of the great man who did the most, when they were yet unrecognised or contested, to popularise and to defend them. But beyond these Voltaire refused to go, and he had not the smallest sympathy with democratic ideas. Popular representation, and government by majorities, were completely foreign to his thoughts, and at a time when despotism was the prevailing form of government throughout Europe his strongest sympathies were with royal authority. He would probably have agreed with the saying of Plato,[1] that when a young, virtuous, enlightened and magnanimous despot is on the throne, and when he has found a great legislator to serve him, God himself can do little more for the happiness of the State. The power of the Sovereign was in his eyes the one efficient barrier against ecclesiastical encroachments, and the chief instrument in effecting reform. 'Who would have thought,' he wrote to D'Alembert in 1765, 'that the cause of kings would be that of philosophers? but yet it is evident that the sages who refuse to admit two powers are the chief support of the royal authority.'[2] 'The greatest evil that can befall a state,' he elsewhere said, 'is a contested legislative power. The happiest years of the monarchy have been those of Henry IV., Lewis XIV. and Lewis XV. when these kings governed by themselves There ought never to be two powers in a state. . . . The presence of philosophers is of great use to a prince and to a state, . . . for philosophers destroy superstition, which is always the enemy of princes.'[3]

Even on the rare occasions when he leaned towards a Republican Government, he showed himself utterly opposed to the idea of universal suffrage and political equality. 'There never,' he once wrote, 'was a

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[1] *Laws*, bk. iv.

[2] See Strauss' *Vie de Voltaire*, pp. 280, 281

[3] *La Voix du Sage et du Peuple.*

perfect government, for men are always influenced by passions, and if they had no passions they would need no government. The most tolerable of all governments is undoubtedly the republican, because it is that which places men most in their position of natural equality. Every father of a family ought to be master in his own house and not in the house of his neighbour; as a country is composed of many houses and many landed properties attached to them, it is contradictory that a single man should be master of these houses and of these properties, and it is natural that each master should have a voice in deciding on the welfare of the society. But should those who possess neither house nor land in the society have a voice? They have no more right to it than a clerk paid by merchants has to regulate their commerce, but they may be made partners if they have rendered some special service or have paid for their partnership.'[1]

In general, however, Voltaire was quite indifferent to representative government, provided the Sovereign regulated his conduct by fixed law, gave religious and intellectual liberty to his people, and favoured administrative reform. Democratic government was equally repugnant to his judgment and to his tastes. All his leanings were towards rank and culture and refinement; and while sincerely desiring to improve the material

[1] *Idées Républicaines.* In one of his letters in 1760 (Sept. 20) he expressed very frankly his genuine opinion about republics: 'Si vous vous souvenez que les Hollandais ont mangé sur le gril le cœur des deux frères De Witt; si vous songez que ces bons Suisses mes voisins ont vendu le duc Louis Sforce pour de l'argent comptant; si vous songez que le républicain Jean Calvin, ce digne théologien, après avoir écrit qu'il ne falloit persécuter personne, pas même ceux qui niaient la Trinité, fit brûler, tout vif, et avec des fagots verts, un Espagnol qui s'exprimait sur la Trinité autrement que lui; en vérité, Monsieur, vous en conclurez qu'il n'y a pas plus de vertu dans les républiques que dans les monarchies.'—*Œuvres de Voltaire*, l. 419, 420.

condition of the masses of mankind, he had very little genuine sympathy with them, and an utter disbelief in their capacities. He could not forgive Shakespeare for his close contact and sympathy with common types of life and character, and for his complete disregard of the conventional elegancies and stateliness of the French stage; and his ignoble sneers at the humble origin of the Maid of Orleans, and at the poor relations of Rousseau, disclose a feeling which was expressed in innumerable passages in his confidential letters. 'We have never,' he once wrote, 'pretended to enlighten shoemakers and servants.' 'The true public is always a minority. The rest is the vulgar. Work for the little public.' 'What the populace requires is guidance and not instruction—it is not worthy of the latter.' 'It is not the day-labourer, but the good bourgeois who needs instruction.'[1] No English Tory indeed, of the eighteenth century, can have believed less in popular enlightenment, and especially in popular government, than this brilliant Frenchman. There is in all great writers, in addition to their definite teaching, a certain tone which runs through all they write, and greatly determines their influence on the world. That of Voltaire is very clearly marked. It is a mixture of scepticism, humanity, and practical good sense; with very little reverence and elevation, and without a tinge of mysticism or fanaticism. Aiming at no high or impracticable ideal; turning away from self-analysis, self-denial, and useless speculation; meeting the perplexities of life with a smile of high-bred epicurean banter;

[1] *Œuvres de Voltaire*, li. 103; liii. 318, 326; lxii. 460. See on this aspect of Voltaire, Desnoiresterres, *Voltaire et la Société au XVIII^e siècle*, tom. vi. pp. 237–240. Many other passages like those I have quoted may be found in the correspondence of Voltaire. Bishop Dupanloup, in his virulent but able *Lettres sur le Centenaire de Voltaire* (1878), has industriously collected them.

seeking in all things for clear ideas and practical and tangible benefits, he accepted cheerfully the facts of life, applied the touchstone of his criticism to all the beliefs that were around him, and laboured steadily, within the limits of his ideals and of his sympathies, to make the world a wiser, happier, and better place than he found it. It is a philosophy which will always be that of a great part, and by no means the worst part of mankind, but it is not a philosophy which produces either passion, heroism, or Utopia, and no one who was thoroughly pervaded with the Voltairian spirit was ever a genuine Revolutionist.

Voltaire must indeed always stand out as the most truly representative figure of that portion of the eighteenth century which preceded the Revolution, and he was not less representative in his limitations than in his qualities. In the profound insight and the power of pursuing long trains of connected thought which constitute a great philosopher; in the higher imaginative gifts of a great poet: in the moral depth, purity, and seriousness of a great character; in the strong passions and sympathies which appeal to the deepest feelings in human nature, he was very deficient, but the world never saw a man more fitted to popularise great masses of obscure knowledge, and to influence widely and variously the opinions of men. Untiring industry, an extraordinary variety of interests and aptitudes, a judgment at once sound, moderate, and independent, a rare power of seizing in every subject the essential arguments or facts, a disposition to take no old opinions on trust and to leave no new opinions unexamined, combined in him with the most extraordinary literary talent. Never, perhaps, was there an intellect at once so luminous, versatile, and flexible; which produced so much; which could deal with such a vast range of difficult subjects without being ever obscure, tangled, or dull. What he

wrote was often superficial in thought and knowledge, and marred by great faults of temper and character, but it was always transparently clear, almost always brilliant and graceful, admirably proportioned and admirably arranged. He had the manners and some of the tastes of Court society; his wit was almost as conspicuous in conversation as in his writings, and though he was looked on with extreme disfavour by the rulers of France, he exercised a great influence on the chief sovereigns of his time. Frederick of Prussia, Catherine of Russia, Joseph II. of Austria, Gustavus III. of Sweden, Christian VII. of Denmark, Frederick of Hesse, and Stanislaus of Poland were among his friends, correspondents, or admirers; and chiefly through their influence a new spirit of enlightenment and tolerance began to pervade the legislation of Europe.

I have already mentioned the immense steps which had at this time been taken in the direction of religious toleration.[1] It had been formally recognised, not only in the chief Protestant countries, but also in the wide dominions of the Empress of Russia. It had been practically admitted through the Austrian dominions. Even in Italy and Spain the power of the persecutor was effectually bridled, and the great persecuting order of the Jesuits was expelled from most European countries and finally suppressed by the Pope. In the half-century before the Revolution measures were taken formally abolishing torture in Prussia, Russia, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Hesse, Tuscany, and Sweden; where it was not abolished it fell into general disuse, and over a great part of Europe the penal codes were revised and mitigated in accordance with the principles of Beccaria and Voltaire.[2] The remnants of serfdom, and of other

[1] See vol. iv. pp. 300, 301.

[2] See *Annual Register*, 1776, pp. 146, 191; 1786, p. 169; 1791, p. 210. Voltaire, *Prix de la Justice et de l'Humanité*, art. xxiv.; Lea, *Superstition and*

feudal oppressions, were at the same time slowly but steadily disappearing. In Italy especially, where the philosophical movement was admirably represented by the writings of Beccaria, Filangieri, Genovesi, and Galanti, a great movement had long been in progress for the purpose of abolishing feudal and mediæval privileges relating to land or to exemptions from taxation. It had been begun as early as 1723 by Victor Amadeus in Piedmont. It was continued by the Lorraine princes in Tuscany, and it was soon carried out in Naples, Sicily, and Savoy.[1] In Germany serfdom and many feudal obligations still existed very widely up to the time of the Revolution,[2] but the State serfs in Pomerania had been enfranchised as early as 1719.[3] A similar measure was carried out on the State domains in Austria,[4] while in Denmark the last traces of villenage was abolished by royal authority.[5] In Poland, though serfdom continued, it had become, under the patronage of the King, a sort of fashion among the more enlightened nobles to give freedom to their peasants, and in the words of an excellent observer, 'The peasantry of the North were travelling fast towards perfect and universal liberty.'[6] The exclusiveness of rank was at the same time diminishing. Never before, except in the small republics of Italy, had commercial and mercantile interests occupied so great a place upon the Continent of Europe; and in France especially, the immense number of the new nobility recruited from these classes and from the professions, was one of the

Force, pp. 386–389; Buckle's *Hist. of Civilisation*, ii. 107–110.

[1] See the history of this very important movement in Doniol, *La Révolution Française et la Féodalité*, pp. 190–200.

[2] Tocqueville, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 34, 35.

[3] Doniol, p. 174.

[4] *Annual Register*, 1776, p. 191.

[5] Gentz, *On the State of Europe*, p. 81.

[6] *Annual Register*, 1791, p. 207.

most characteristic features of the time. Men like Colbert and Louvois and Vergennes and Sartine and Necker, whose families had very recently risen from humble positions, directed in a great measure the Government, while the social influence of literature was continually increasing.

The changed spirit I have described was everywhere perceptible in the laws. It was still more perceptible in their administration, and the immediate impulse of reform all over Europe appeared to come from the sovereigns. The language of Condorcet in describing the condition of continental Europe in the period between the death of Descartes and the French Revolution, is very remarkable. In France, Spain, Hungary, and Bohemia, he says, the feeble traces of political liberty that had existed had disappeared, but these more or less real losses were more than compensated by the destruction of arbitrary aristocracies. The quality of man was more respected. Royal despotism destroyed the more grievous oppressions and humiliations of feudalism. A new spirit of equality passed into the laws. A kind of despotism arose which had been hitherto unknown in Europe. It was almost absolute by law, but it was at the same time restrained by opinion, directed by enlightened views, and mitigated by a regard to its own interest, and it often contributed largely to the increase of riches, industry, and instruction, and sometimes even to that of civil liberty Manners were softened by the decay of prejudices; by the growth of the industrial and commercial spirit; by the horror which the recollection of the religious wars had produced; by the diffusion of philosophic ideas of equality and humanity. Religious intolerance still lingered in the statute-book, but it was now regarded as a matter of human prudence, a necessary homage to popular prejudices, a precaution against the effer-

rescence of popular passions. It had lost its old character of ferocity and fanaticism. It took milder forms, and had of late years greatly diminished. Everywhere, and on all subjects, though slowly and perhaps reluctantly, the practice of governments has followed the march of opinion and even the ideas of the philosopher.[1]

This was the nature of the reform that Voltaire and his followers desired, and the revolution to which they looked forward was a peaceful and a happy destruction of superstition, barbarous laws, and feudal oppression, initiated and supported by royal authority. In a little treatise called the 'Voyage of Reason,' which he wrote as late as 1774, he enumerates with exultation the many and great reforms which had been accomplished during the century, and boasts that the spirit of enlightenment and toleration had descended upon all the chief Courts in Europe, and was not unknown even in the Vatican.[2] 'Everything I see,' he once wrote, 'scatters the seeds of a revolution which will indubitably arrive, and which I shall not have the happiness to witness.' . . . 'The young are indeed happy, for they will see great things.'[3] 'The general weariness of Christianity,' wrote his follower Grimm, 'which is manifested in all parts, and especially in Catholic States, the disquiet which is vaguely agitating the minds of men, and leading them to attack religious and political abuses, is a phenomenon as characteristic of our century as the spirit of reform was of the sixteenth, and it foreshadows an imminent and inevitable revolution. One may say that France is the centre of this revolution, which will

[1] Condorcet, *Progrès de l'Esprit humain*, pp. 189–192 (abridged). Compare the striking picture of the reforms in the generation that preceded the Revolution, in Gentz, *On the State of Europe*, pp. 69–88.

[2] *Œuvres de Voltaire*, tom. xl. pp. 438–449.

[3] See Rocquain, p. 245. This was in 1764.

at least have this advantage over the preceding ones, that it will be effected without costing any blood.'[1]

It will appear, I think, from the foregoing considerations that the influence of Voltaire and his followers in producing the Revolution, though real, has been greatly exaggerated. The first important signs of political opposition, indeed, are not to be found in the writings of the philosophers, but in those conflicts between the Court and the Parliaments which fill a great part of the French history of the first seventy years of the eighteenth century.

The Parliament of Paris and the twelve provincial parliaments, which at this time existed in France, were not representative and legislative assemblies. They were judicial and magisterial bodies—High Courts of Justice consisting of the most eminent lawyers nominated by the Crown. They were divided into different chambers, and they exercised the highest jurisdiction in their several provinces, but they also exercised two functions which were of a political nature. They had a right of remonstrating against the edicts of the King, and they claimed the much more important power of a veto upon legislation. When the King issued an edict he sent it to the Parliament of Paris to be registered; it only acquired the force of law after this registration, and the Parliament claimed the right of delaying or withholding its sanction. This power, however, was contested, and the King possessed an authority, which, when fully exerted, completely annihilated it. He could go down to the Parliament, and by holding what was called 'a bed of justice,' could by his simple order compel the Parliament to register his edict on pain of banishment or exile. But

[1] Grimm et Diderot, *Correspondance*, Jan. 1768.

such a measure was an extreme, and generally an unpopular one, and the fact that every law required the sanction, and was exposed to the criticism, of an independent judicial body, had a real importance in mitigating the despotism of the Government. The King was able to override the wishes of the Parliament; but if that body was supported by strong public opinion; if any circumstances had contributed to weaken the authority of the Crown; and especially if a public loan depending for its success on the credit of the Government was required, the parliamentary opposition became very serious.[1]

The political powers of the Parliament had passed through several phases, which are not altogether free from controversy and obscurity. At first, and for a long period, the registration of edicts was probably nothing more than a legal form attesting their authenticity, but carrying with it no further power or responsibility. Under Lewis XI., however, the Parliament of Paris began, before registering edicts, to make remonstrances or observations about them to the King, and this grew into a recognised right. The dignity of the Parliament was much increased under Lewis XII., when the Court of Peers, drawn from the highest nobility, and exercising the highest jurisdiction, was united with it;[2] and during the civil wars, and especially during the Fronde, its political power and activity were enormously increased. The strong government of Lewis XIV. reduced it again to complete political impotence.

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[1] The part played by the Parliaments in preparing the Revolution has been recently investigated with singular learning and impartiality by two admirable historians, who are much less known in England than they ought to be. Rocquain, *L'Esprit Révolutionnaire avant la Révolution*; and Chérest, *La Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, i. 234–241. See, too, Louis Blanc, *Hist. de la Révolution*, i. 437, 438; Mme. de Staël, *Consid. sur la Révolution*, i. 129–154; Voltaire, *Hist. du Parlement de Paris*.

[2] Cassagnac, *Causes de la Révolution*, i. 346–355.

It was forbidden to remonstrate. It was at last allowed to make representations, but only eight days after it had duly registered the royal edict, and it was now mainly confined to its judicial functions. But in the weak Governments that followed the death of Lewis XIV. the Parliament regained its authority. It annulled the will of the late King; it settled the Regency, and it soon made itself a most powerful organ of opinion. The sale of offices had given it a great independence, for its members now held permanent and hereditary posts which they had purchased, and which they regarded as their absolute property.[1] The Parliament consisted chiefly of men who had sprung from the richest families of the third estate; but it included some who belonged or were allied to the first families in France, while its influence extended to the subordinate law courts and to all the humbler members of the legal profession.[2] With the growth of industry and commerce that profession had been rising rapidly in importance, and all over France it looked up to the Parliament of Paris as its supreme representative.

A body so constituted, so widely connected, and with such great powers of obstructing and directing the administration of justice, only needed a popular cause to be very formidable. It found this in the dispute between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, when the Court supported the former, and the Parliament, representing a great body of public opinion, constituted itself the champion of the latter. For the first time for many years there was a direct, open, and serious opposition to the Crown. The immediate cause was the famous

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[1] See Tocqueville, *Ancien Régime*, p. 162; L. Blanc, *Hist. de la Révolution*, i. 435; Chérest, *La Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, i. 238, 239.

[2] See the excellent remarks of Grimm on the influence of the Parliaments, *Mém. Historiques*, vii. 232, 233.

Bull Unigenitus, which had been promulgated at the inspiration of the Jesuits, in 1713, condemning one hundred and one propositions in a work of the Jansenist Quesnel, and among others several relating to free grace, which appeared almost literally extracted from St. Paul and St. Augustine. The dispute raged incessantly from the time of the promulgation of the Bull; and in 1730 and the two following years it took a very acute form. An Archbishop of Paris attempted to compel his clergy formally to accept the Bull, and he excommunicated some who resisted. They consulted the lawyers, and forty Paris advocates drew up a memorial, inviting an appeal to the Parliament, and at the same time containing some sentences which, in a despotic monarchy, were deemed absolutely revolutionary. 'By the constitution of the kingdom,' they said, 'the Parliaments are the Senate of the nation; the sovereign depositors of the laws of the State; the representatives of the public authority.' They have supreme jurisdiction over all the members of the State. No one has a right to place himself above their decisions. 'Laws are essentially conventions between those who govern, and those who are governed.'

These doctrines were censured by the Council of State as attacking the first principle of the French monarchy, which is, that the whole supreme power rests in the person of the King. The advocates, in their reply, acknowledged this principle; but they still maintained that by the fundamental laws of the kingdom the Parliaments had a right of judging on appeal abuses of ecclesiastical authority. The lawyers of Paris and Rouen fully supported their colleagues, and the quarrel was envenomed by the appearance in the arena of several bishops on one side, and of the Parliament of Paris on the other. The Parliament ordered the suppression of a number of Episcopal pastorals denying its

jurisdiction and censuring the advocates, and in September 1731 it issued a decree asserting in the very words of old French laws that 'the temporal power is independent of all other Powers, that it alone has the right of restraining the subjects of the King, and that the ministers of the Church are accountable to the Parliament, under the authority of the monarch, for the exercise of their jurisdiction.'

Cardinal Fleury at this time directed the administration of France, and he deeply resented these proceedings. By the advice of his minister and of his Council, the King exiled eleven of the recalcitrant advocates; annulled the recent decree of Parliament, forbade the Parliament to engage in any discussion on ecclesiastical questions, or on the limits between the temporal and ecclesiastical power, and refused to see the members when they went to remonstrate against this restriction of their rights. On the other hand, the advocates of Paris refused to plead in the law courts until their exiled colleagues were recalled, and the members of the Parliament threatened to resign their offices, and thus stop the whole administration of justice if their jurisdiction and liberty were curtailed. They were summoned to Compiègne, and sternly rebuked by the King; but they pursued their course in defiance of the royal commands. They censured a new pastoral issued by the Archbishop of Paris, and forbade its distribution. The King at once annulled the order, and caused several of the offending members to be arrested and exiled. One hundred and fifty magistrates then resigned, leaving the Parliament House amid the acclamations of an immense crowd. Threats of degradation, exile, and confiscation, were freely employed by the Court; but in July 1732 a kind of truce was made, and the Parliament consented to resume its functions.

The quarrel, however, almost immediately revived,

The Court again attempted to prevent the Parliament from discussing ecclesiastical matters, and it determined to limit its power both of appeal and remonstrance. A bed of justice held to register a declaration with this object, was pronounced by the Parliament to be invalid on account of a technical flaw, and the Minister at once replied by exiling no less than 139 magistrates. Public opinion was now highly excited; the administration of justice was seriously impeded, and as the war of 1733 was just breaking out, Fleury feared a continuance of intestine troubles. The sentence of exile against the magistrates was accordingly recalled in November 1733. The declaration limiting the rights of the Parliament was suspended, and that body having for the present substantially triumphed, the conflict was for a time terminated.

Barbier, who has so fully related the proceedings of this time, notices that 'the good City of Paris was Jansenist from head to foot.' The Parisians, in general, he admits, knew nothing and cared nothing, about the theological distinctions that were at issue; but they detested Rome and the Jesuits, and they vehemently applauded the resistance of the magistrates. A political doctrine analogous to the Gallican theory of Catholicism now came into fashion. 'As the whole Church,' it was said, 'is above the Pope, so the nation is above the King.' Like James II. of England, Lewis XV. had contrived to throw into opposition the political forces which were naturally the strongest bulwarks of the throne. The Gallican form of Catholicism, while extremely jealous of Roman meddling, exalted the duty of passive obedience to the sovereign as highly as the Church of England, and on this point there was no difference between the Gallican and the Jansenist. A Parliament of magistrates invested with high judicial duties, and holding by right of purchase hereditary offices which conveyed the privileges of nobility, was an

essentially aristocratic and conservative body. It had no sympathy with the school of freethinking which had arisen, and Voltaire's 'Letters on the English' had been one of the very numerous books which the Parliament of Paris had ordered to be burnt. But by the force of circumstances, and in the absence of any real representative system, this body had now become the chief bulwark against despotism, and the best exponent of the popular feeling, and there was a great desire to aggrandise its power. A memoir was circulated arguing that the French Parliaments were coeval with the monarchy, and rightful representatives of the people, and that the power claimed by the King's Council over them was an usurpation. 'The business of a sovereign,' it continued, 'is to maintain, and not to destroy the laws. This is his oath—this is the contract which he has made with his people. As he cannot make laws without the concurrence of Parliament, he ought to acquiesce in its refusals or remonstrances. If the magistrates abandoned their right of resistance, they would be false to their duties.'[1]

The peace of 1738, giving Lorraine to France, threw some credit over the Government of Lewis XV.; but it was almost the last gleam of success in his long and ignoble reign. During the war that preceded it, the conflicts between the Court and Parliament were suspended; but they revived in the last years of the life of Fleury, and again after a few years' interval, in 1747 and the following years. The questions at issue still related chiefly to the limits of ecclesiastical and temporal jurisdiction, and the right of Parliament as a judicial body to control the abuses of ecclesiastical

[1] See a very full account of this conflict in Rocquain, *L'Esprit Révolutionnaire avant la Révolution*, pp. 64–72; Aubertin, *L'Esprit public au XVIIIe siècle*, pp. 260–272; Voltaire, *Hist. du Parlement.*

power; but the Parliament also made some real attempts to check, by repeated remonstrances against new taxes, the financial ruin which was approaching. The tax known as 'the tenth' had been imposed as a war tax, and an attempt to continue it in time of peace caused violent and general discontent, and was resisted by several provincial Parliaments. A modified form known as 'the twentieth' was at last adopted; but it was only sanctioned by the Parliament at the express command of the King, and it was only collected with great difficulty, and sometimes by force of arms.[1] From 1748 to 1758, discontent arose in Paris almost to the point of revolution. The popularity of the King had totally gone. He was sunk in the lowest and most degraded vice, almost indifferent to public affairs, and swayed to and fro by a succession of mistresses, and the extravagance of his Court was unchecked, while the finances of the country were all but ruined, and while its industry was crushed by excessive and unequal taxation. The peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 was extremely unpopular, for it terminated a costly war without obtaining for France a single advantage for the sacrifices she had made.

An attempt to put an end to the exemption from taxation which the clergy enjoyed, was resisted and failed, and the fanaticism of De Beaumont, who had been made Archbishop of Paris in 1746, fanned the Jansenist quarrel into a flame. He ordered his priests to refuse the Sacrament, even in the agony of death, to any one who could not show a ticket of confession, proving that he had accepted the Bull Unigenitus, and he also endeavoured to obtain a complete control over the hospitals of Paris. On both points he was resisted by the Parliament. Priests who had refused the Sacra-

[1] Rocquain, pp. 128, 129.

ments under these circumstances were prosecuted, imprisoned, or exiled. The Government interposed in their favour, and in several cases annulled their condemnation, and there were vehement recriminations between the Court and the Parliaments in which public opinion was unquestionably with the latter. Supported by the provincial Parliaments, the Parliament of Paris, in 1752, formally condemned the tickets of confession, forbade any ecclesiastics to refuse the Sacraments because those tickets were not produced, ordered its decree to be posted at the corners of every street in Paris, burnt a number of sermons and episcopal mandates, accused the Archbishop of Paris of 'schismatic manœuvres,' and of disobeying its orders, and even seized on his temporal possessions.

The Government in February 1753 interposed by the form called a 'main levée' to prevent the confiscation, and ordered the Parliament, by letters patent, to abstain from any further action on the subject. The Parliament refused to register these letters, and declared its determination to resist. In the night of May 8 and 9, 1753, letters of 'cachet' were issued, and all the members of the Parliament of Paris, except those who formed the 'grand chamber,' were exiled, and ordered to leave Paris in twenty-four hours. The 'grand chamber' was the first of the seven chambers into which the Parliament of Paris was divided, and it was hoped that its members, as they consisted of the older magistrates, many of whom received pensions from the Court, would prove flexible. They declared, however, that they shared the sentiments of their colleagues, and they were accordingly exiled to Pontoise, and afterwards to Soissons. The remonstrances drawn up by the Parliament against the invasion of the rights of the civil power by ecclesiastics, and of the rights of Parliament by the Court, were widely circulated, and exercised a great influence on opinion.

The provincial Parliaments supported the Parliament of Paris, and the conflict became continually more bitter. The University of Paris and a number of legal bodies sent deputations congratulating the magistrates on their firmness. Swarms of anonymous or pseudonymous pamphlets and lampoons assailed the Government and the clergy. Seditious placards appeared upon the walls. Immense assemblages attended the funerals of those who had been refused the Sacraments on their deathbeds. Riots broke out in many quarters and numerous arrests were made. A spirit of fierce persecution seemed to animate those in power. Refusals of the Sacraments greatly multiplied. There was a new and severe persecution of Protestants, and a greatly increased stringency in the censorship of the press. For eight nights after the disgrace of the Parliament of Paris the streets were patrolled by cavalry, and the palace of the Archbishop was protected by a large body of soldiers. It was at this time that D'Argenson wrote: 'The loss of religion in France cannot be attributed to the English philosophy; which has only influenced about a hundred philosophers in Paris, but to the hatred of the priests, which has now risen to excess. The ministers of religion can scarcely show themselves in the streets without being hooted, and all this comes from the Bull Unigenitus and from the disgrace of the Parliament.'[1] A royal court established to fulfil the functions of the Parliament had no weight or influence, and words were spoken which seemed to belong to the time of the Revolution. There were rumours that all the Parliaments united would demand the assembly of the States-General to represent authoritatively the whole nation. A bishop of Montauban in 1753, in a pastoral which was suppressed by the Parliament of Toulouse, re-

[1] D'Argenson, *Mémoires*, viii. 35; Rocquain, p. 170.

called the history of the conflict between the English Parliament and Charles I., and insinuated that another Parliament might be the means of conducting another king to the scaffold.[1] The suppression of the Chatelet, the law court which fulfilled some of the suspended functions of the Parliament, was expected, and D'Argenson relates the prediction of a magistrate, with which he himself agreed, that in that case 'the shops would at once be closed, barricades would be thrown up in the streets, and in this way the Revolution would begin.'[2] 'Everything,' wrote that very acute observer in March 1754, 'is preparing the way for civil war. . . . It is the priests who are everywhere pushing on these troubles and this disorder. The minds of men are turning to discontent and disobedience, and everything seems moving towards a great revolution, both in religion and government.'[3] 'The evil resulting from our absolute monarchical Government,' he wrote on another occasion, 'is persuading all France and all Europe, that it is the worst of Governments. . . . This opinion advances, rises, strengthens, and may lead to a national revolution;'[4] and he predicted forty years before the Revolution actually broke out, that a great diminution of kingly power 'and even republicanism' was the probable issue in France.[5]

The journals of D'Argenson between 1740 and 1756 are full of such predictions, and they paint with a wonderful sagacity the signs of the times. 'A philosophic wind of free and anti-monarchical government blows upon us—it is passing into the minds of men. . . . A revolution may be accomplished with less opposition than is supposed, . . . it may be made by acclama-

[1] Rocquain, p. 175.
[2] D'Argenson, viii. 202, 203.
[3] Ibid. viii. 241, 242.
[4] Ibid. vii. 294, 295.
[5] Ibid. vii. 242.

tion. . . . All orders are at once discontented. Everything is combustible. A riot may pass into revolt, and a revolt into a complete Revolution.' 'The words "nation" and "State" were never heard so often as now. They were never pronounced under Lewis XIV. There was then no idea corresponding to them. . . . This comes to us from the Parliament and from the English.' 'Our opinions are much influenced by the neighbourhood of England, and opinion governs the world. Who can say whether in the future, despotism will increase or diminish in France? For my part, I look forward to the latter, and even to republicanism. I have seen in my life the respect and love of the people for royalty diminish. Lewis XV. has not known how to govern either as a despot or as a good chief of a republic, and woe to the royal authority when neither course is taken.' The Government is 'an extravagant anarchy.' 'No firmness, no resolution, no decision of any kind. It is a weathercock blown on in turns by the courtiers who surround it.' 'Weakness and submission to ill-directed impulses injure society much more seriously than the most refined malice. This reign is a proof, for with these faults it has produced more evil than the much more tyrannical reigns that preceded it.'[1]

It will be observed that the whole conflict I have described was almost unconnected with the philosophical, freethinking, and literary movement to which the Revolution has been too largely attributed. It had risen to a great height by the middle of the century before Voltaire had made any serious attack on the Christian faith, before the publication of the 'Encyclopædia,' before any of the important writings of Rous-

[1] D'Argenson, vi. 464, vii. 242, viii. 315. Many other passages to the same effect have been collected by Rocquain and Aubertin.

seau, Diderot, D'Alembert, Helvétius, or Holbach. At the same time, as Voltaire had truly said, a spirit of inquiry and reasoning, unknown in the previous reign, had long been abroad, and it weakened the empire of authority and tradition. It was at the end of 1753 that Chesterfield wrote the well-known letter to his son, in which he enumerates the signs of catastrophe which he saw gathering in France—the King at once despised and hated, 'jealous of the Parliaments who would support his authority, and a devoted bigot to the Church that would destroy it'—his ministers disunited and incapable—the people poor and discontented—the clergy and the Parliaments irreconcilable enemies. 'The French nation,' he continued, 'reasons freely, which they never did before, upon matters of religion and government, and begins to be spregiudicati: the officers do so too: in short, all the symptoms which I have ever met with in history previous to great changes and revolutions in government, now exist and daily increase in France.' [1]

Madame de Pompadour perhaps saved the country from an immediate rising, by inducing the King in the summer of 1754 once more to reverse his policy. Employing as a pretext the birth of the prince who was afterwards Lewis XVI., he suppressed the unpopular royal Court, recalled and reinstated the Parliament of Paris, and released the magistrates who had been imprisoned. There was for a time great exultation in Paris, and it was increased when the King, having vainly endeavoured to induce the bishops to abandon their war against Jansenism, and especially the tickets of confession, exiled the Archbishops of Paris and Aix and the Bishops of Orleans and Troyes. For a time, the policy of the Court seemed completely changed.

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[1] Chesterfield's *Letters*, ii. 318, 319.

The Parliaments were left free to prosecute and punish priests who refused the Sacraments to those who had not accepted the Papal Bull. The persecution of Protestants was arrested. The 'Encyclopædia,' which had been suppressed, was again allowed to appear, and the Parliament of Paris was once more in close alliance with the Court, and took no resolution without consulting the King. There seldom was a stranger example of that extreme vacillation, that instability of policy which was rapidly educating the French people into habits of insubordination and opposition, and it is also curious to observe even at this time the complete absence of moderation and measure which is now the characteristic defect of French political life. In countries where constitutional government really flourishes, political disputes are habitually settled by compromise, and in the way of bargain. In France all political life is modelled after war, and it is the main object of the victorious party to pursue its advantage to the utmost.

Some priests were condemned by the Parliament to perpetual banishment; some who refused to appear before it were, in their absence, condemned to the galleys; numerous writings against the Parliament were burnt; the sentences were placarded in the most conspicuous parts of Paris, and the Parliament even went so far as to issue a decree declaring that the Bull was not a rule of faith, and forbidding any ecclesiastic, 'of whatever order, quality, or dignity he might be, to attribute to it this character.' The decree was evidently directed against the bishops, and it was no less evidently an invasion of their rightful spiritual province. Public opinion, however, strongly supported it, and the hatred of the priests, and especially of the Jesuits, was such that they could scarcely appear without insult in the streets. The Archbishop of Paris, availing himself of the September vacation of the Parliament in 1756,

issued an instruction excommunicating all priests who administered the Sacrament in obedience to orders from a secular tribunal, all Catholics who asked for such orders, and all magistrates who granted them, and he announced that more than sixty bishops were ready to support him. The Chatelet, as the Parliament was not sitting, took up the matter, and the instruction of the Archbishop was publicly burnt, amid the applause of a great multitude. The Archbishop retaliated by threatening with excommunication all who read the sentence of the Chatelet. The Chatelet forbade anyone to print or circulate this 'mandement' under penalty of corporal punishment, and in the space of a fortnight condemned to the fire the pastorals of seven other bishops who had expressed their concurrence with the Archbishop.[1]

The Government, alarmed at the fury of the religious war which appeared daily increasing, privately appealed to Benedict XIV., who was at this time governing the Church with eminent wisdom and moderation. It was impossible, however, for a Pope to abandon or retract a Papal Bull, and with the best intentions Benedict only fanned the flame. He issued a brief, declaring the Bull Unigenitus to be a law of the Church which could not be repudiated without danger to salvation; but in order to avoid scandal, the French priests were directed to administer the Sacraments to suspected Jansenists 'at their own risk and peril,' and to refuse them only to 'notorious' Jansenists. The King sent this brief to the bishops with an order to conform to it, but the Parliament refused all conciliation and issued a decree suppressing the Papal brief.[2]

It was evident that the Parliament was obtaining an entirely new position and authority in the State, and it was equally evident that a very formidable public

[1] Rocquain, pp. 183–199. [2] Ibid. p. 199.

opinion had suddenly arisen. Discussions about the fundamental laws of the State might be heard even among the common people in the market-place, and the question whether France was a tempered and representative monarchy, or an uncontrolled despotism, like Turkey, was eagerly debated. If the King possessed the power he had frequently exercised, of giving his edicts the force of law by means of 'beds of justice,' in spite of the remonstrances of the Parliament, France was in fact a pure despotism; but the opinion was now becoming almost universal, beyond the limits of the Court and of the clergy, that no edict had the force of law which had not been registered by the free consent of the magistrates. 'The people,' wrote D'Argenson, 'are become great lovers of Parliaments. They see in them a remedy for the vexations they suffer on all sides. All this foreshadows some revolt that is already smouldering.' 'If it should become necessary to assemble the States-General, they would not assemble in vain.' The Parliaments were spoken of as the 'National Government,' 'the true Monarch of France,' 'the source of legitimate power.' [1]

The provincial Parliaments had also begun to act in close concert with the Parliament of Paris, and the doctrine had grown up that they were all only parts, or according to the received phrase 'classes' of a single organic whole, which, in the absence of the States-General, was the permanent and legitimate representative of the nation. The Parliaments themselves supported this claim, and it was evident that if admitted it would completely transform the government of the country.

Another consequence of this religious war was a portentously rapid spread of religious scepticism. Any-

[1] Rocquain, pp. 194-196; Aubertin, pp. 274-278.

one who has any real knowledge of life will have perceived that great changes of opinion among large masses of men are almost always effected, not by direct argument, but by a change of predispositions and sympathies. When the tide of opinion flows strongly against a class, the minds of men will be prepared to question or reject what they teach. The great literary movement against Christianity was conducted with genius and perseverance; but it would never have had a wide and popular influence, if men had not been prepared to receive it. It was the hatred excited by arrogant, persecuting, and meddling priests; it was the wrangling that constantly took place at marriages and deathbeds; it was the perpetual interference of Jesuits with the relations of domestic life, that had gradually opened the French mind. It was noticed at the Carnival of 1756 that the most popular figures were ignoble caricatures of ecclesiastics, monks, and nuns,[1] and a swarm of writings were now circulated from hand to hand, assailing the very foundations of the Christian faith.

The Court, alarmed at the growing claims of the Parliaments, desirous of obtaining a voluntary contribution from the clergy for the Seven Years' War, which was just breaking out, and justly indignant at the treatment by the Parliament of the Papal Bull, which had been recommended to it, turned violently to the other side. In December 1756, the King went down with great ceremony to the Parliament, and having held a bed of justice, he authoritatively enjoined the reception of the Bull as a decree of the Church; curtailed the judicial functions of Parliament in ecclesiastical cases, and peremptorily declared that he would enforce his decision by the full weight of his authority. Menacing signs of popular indignation appeared; but there was

[1] D'Argenson, ix. 216.

no actual outbreak, and the attempt of Damiens on the life of the King turned for the moment the popular sentiment. The next few years present a confused and stormy picture of conflict and vacillation. Great numbers of the magistrates resigned their offices. The courts of justice were again interrupted. Seditious placards again appeared in the streets. Nearly every new tax required for the war produced a wrangle, and the Parliament of Besançon having distinguished itself by its opposition to an unpopular tax, four of its members were thrown into prison, and twenty-eight exiled. The Parliament of Paris now described arrests by letters of 'cachet' as 'the irregular methods of absolute power,' and as contrary to the 'rights of the nation.' It remonstrated again and again, in terms which excited the warm admiration of Burke,[1] against the extravagance and complete absence of any real control, that prevailed in French finances. It openly questioned the authority of beds of justice to compel it to register decrees, to which it had not fully consented. It maintained in concurrence with the provincial Parliaments the doctrine of the unity of all the Parliaments of the nation, and of the existence of fundamental laws which the Sovereign could not disregard. On the other hand, the Chancellor in the name of the King sternly blamed the remonstrances of the Parliament, and emphatically asserted that the whole sovereign power of the country resided in the King. The Archbishop was recalled from exile; but soon on new provocation was again exiled, and the same system of alternate severity and indulgence was pursued in dealing with the magistrates. Freethinking and seditious writers were fiercely pursued, and in this respect there was little difference

[1] See a remarkable passage in his *Observations on the State of the Nation.*

between the opposing parties. Among other instances of petty persecution, an advocate was struck off the rolls, by order of the Parliament of Paris, for having written against the refusal of Christian burial to actors.[1]

One great concession, however, was made to public opinion. A series of recent scandals had strengthened the hostility to the Jesuits, which had now become one of the strongest passions of the French mind. All the Parliaments were united in hatred of them, and the immoral or seditious sentiments in their writings were abundantly exposed. Their books were now publicly burnt. Their houses were suppressed. Their schools were closed, and at last, in 1764, to the great delight of the nation, the order was absolutely banished from the soil of France.

The royal power, however, seemed evidently sinking. The disasters of Rossbach, Crevelt, Minden, Belleisle and Quebec fell with crushing effects, and the Peace of 1763 was the most calamitous and humiliating in modern French history. It was more so even than the Peace of Utrecht, for then at least the original object of the war had been accomplished by the maintenance of a Bourbon prince on the Spanish throne. By claiming absolute authority the monarchy incurred and accepted undivided responsibility; and it had given France neither internal peace, nor financial prosperity, nor military glory, and had led her into a disastrous conflict with a great constitutional kingdom. The splendour with which the genius of the elder Pitt irradiated English parliamentary life, the soundness of English finance, the magnificence of the English conquests, had all their part in discrediting by contrast the form of government existing in France. It had of

[1] Rocquain, p. 226.

late years become very common to compare the two countries, and there was hardly more than one point in which the comparison could at this time fill a Frenchman with legitimate pride. French contemporary literature, indeed, was in influence and genius the first in the world, yet almost every French writer had been treated as a criminal, and almost every French book of importance had incurred the hostility of the Government.

The question of taxation again gave rise to serious conflicts. The war had ended, but a burden of overwhelming weight still continued. In May 1763, a bed of justice was held in which edicts, removing some taxes but imposing others, were registered by express royal command. The Parliament of Paris protested against these forced registrations as 'tending to the subversion of the fundamental laws of the kingdom,' and some of the provincial Parliaments positively refused to register the edicts until detailed accounts of the finances of the nation had been laid before them. 'The magistrates,' it was said, 'were not called together to register the royal edicts in order to approve of them blindly,' and they ordered their remonstrances to be printed and disseminated. The King on his side suppressed these remonstrances, and the commanders of the provinces were directed 'manu militari' to obtain the registration of the edicts. Numbers of magistrates were arrested. Some signed in the presence and under the intimidation of soldiers. Eighty members of the Parliament of Rouen resigned. The Parliament of Paris in a strong remonstrance supported the provincial Parliaments, described the conduct of the Government in imposing its edicts by force of arms as placing the French nation in the position of a humiliated and subjugated people, and declared that these attacks on a 'sacred and inviolable magistracy' must shake the

stability of the throne, and teach the people that what was maintained by force might be overthrown by force. No edicts, the Parliament now boldly said, were lawfully obligatory which had not been 'freely registered,' not only by the Parliament of Paris, but by all the Parliaments in France. The Government, alarmed at the resistance it encountered, modified its edicts, announced to the Parliaments that the King was willing of his clemency to pardon their rebellion, invited them to communicate their views about possible improvements in the management of the finances, and enjoined an absolute silence on all that had happened.[1]

If the Revolution had at this time broken out, it would probably have excited but little surprise. In the 'Emile' of Rousseau, which was published in 1762, there occurs the remarkable prediction that 'Europe was approaching a state of crisis and the age of revolutions,' and that none of its great monarchies were likely to last long.[2] In the summer of the following year Wilkes was in Paris, and in an interesting letter to Lord Temple he described the violence with which the Parliaments were treated, and added, 'The most sensible men here think that this country is on the eve of a great revolution.'[3] Burke, looking on the subject from another side, showed clearly in a pamphlet published in 1769 how financial disorders were preparing the way for a great convulsion that might affect not only France but all Europe.[4] The clergy, indignant at the expulsion of

[1] Rocquain, pp. 239-243.

[2] *Emile*, livre iii.

[3] *Grenville Papers*, ii. 99, 100.

[4] 'Indeed, under such extreme straitness and distraction labours the whole body of their finances, so far does their charge outrun their supply in every particular, that no man, I believe, who has considered their affairs with any degree of attention or information, but must hourly look for some extraordinary convulsion in that whole system; the effect of which on France, and even on all Europe, it is difficult to conjecture.'—*Observations on the State of the Nation.*

the Jesuits, at the contempt with which two Papal Bulls in favour of that order were treated, and at the rapid increase of sceptical writings and opinions, held a General Assembly in 1765, in which they condemned the writings of Helvétius, Diderot, Voltaire, and Rousseau, and declared that 'the spirit of the century seemed to threaten the State with a revolution, which was likely to result in a general ruin and destruction.'[1]

In the same assembly they once more asserted as against the Parliaments the entire independence of the ecclesiastical power in all things relating to God, and especially in the administration of the Sacraments, and declaring that the Bull Unigenitus was 'a dogmatic judgment of the Universal Church,' they pronounced that those who were refractory to it must, like other public sinners, be publicly refused the Sacraments. The Parliament ordered this declaration to be suppressed, and a circular letter of the Archbishop of Rheims to be burnt. The King, on the petition of the bishops, cancelled this decree. The censured writings were assiduously circulated, together with pamphlets accusing the magistrates of 'deliberately labouring to overthrow the throne and the altar,' and petitions asking for the restoration of the Jesuits. At last in May 1766 an order of Council was published, ordering the observance of the Gallican maxims of 1682 fixing the bounds of the two powers, and it at the same time repeated the declaration of 1731 prescribing absolute silence on these questions.[2]

It was little more than a dead letter, and the contest between the Parliaments and the bishops continued with unabated virulence; but it no longer excited the same interest. The anti-Christian movement was now at its

[1] Rocquain, pp. 251–253. [2] Ibid. pp. 252–255.

height, and the public had ceased to care about the Bull Unigenitus. The atrocious punishment of the Chevalier de la Barre, a young soldier of nineteen, who was condemned for blasphemy in 1766, tortured with horrible severity, and then beheaded, excited a deep-seated indignation, and innumerable writings were circulated advocating complete religious toleration, and attacking priests, monks, nuns, Christianity, and even Theism itself. Many who sold these writings were thrown into prison, and some were sent to the galleys; but it was plain that the anti-Christian literature represented the opinions, and met the demands, of the great body of the educated classes, and that crowds of administrators in all departments connived at or favoured its circulation. Atheism had penetrated into the monasteries, perhaps even into the episcopal palaces, and the sincere Catholics did nothing to make their religion respected. The faculty of theology selected this time to declare that religious intolerance was of the essence of Catholicism, and that it was the duty of princes to place their swords at the service of the faith.[1] I have already mentioned the episcopal memorial of 1770, 'on the evil consequences of liberty of thinking and printing.'[2] What little devotion remained was of a very sickly character. A skull illuminated with tapers, and adorned with ribbons and pearls, might at this time be commonly found in a devout lady's boudoir. It was called 'La Belle Mignonne,' and the devotee was accustomed to spend a portion of every day in prayer and meditation before it. The Queen was much addicted to this devotion, and the skull before which she prayed was said to be that of Ninon de l'Enclos.[3]

Nearly everything strong, masculine, and intellec-

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[1] Rocquain, p. 262. [2] Ibid. p. 275.
[3] D'Argenson, *Mém.* vii. 16, 17.

tual, was opposed to the Church, and the great favour which the chief sovereigns of Europe showed to the Encyclopædists reacted upon and elevated their position in France. Voltaire boasted, with some truth, that their ideas were in the ascendant from St. Petersburg to Cadiz. How little the French Government itself regarded Papal anathemas, was shown by its conduct in 1768, when having quarrelled with the Pope, chiefly on a matter relating to Parma and Placentia, it seized upon the Papal town and territory of Avignon, incorporated them for a time into the French monarchy, and refused to restore them till the end of 1773, when the Pope had at last yielded to the demand of France, Spain, and Naples, for the suppression of the Jesuits.[1]

The political questions at issue between the Parliaments and the Court were of a graver and more important character. Could the King impose taxes without the free consent of the Parliament? Could he legitimately, by a 'bed of justice,' compel the magistrates to register edicts of which they did not approve? Could he arrest, imprison, and exile them if they refused to obey? Had the Council of State, which was essentially the organ of the King, the power of annulling the decrees of the Parliament, and arresting the prosecutions which it ordered? What was the nature, and what were the relations, of the Parliaments? Were they merely a number of separate law courts, deriving all their force and authority from the Sovereign, or were they branches of one organic whole, of an institution which was one of the oldest parts of the French Government, and which had, by right, original and independent powers? Was the registration of the royal edicts, which was required before they obtained the force of law, a mere matter of form, attestation, or

[1] Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, pp. 69, 70.

verification, in which the magistrates acted the parts of witnesses or clerks, or did it mean that those edicts were to be submitted to their free judgments, and that they might be annulled by their veto? It is obvious that such questions touched the very foundations of French government, and they were not likely to be settled by archæological, historical, or juridical arguments, but by the pressure either of opinion or of force. If, as appeared at one time probable, the Parliaments established the position for which they contended, the French monarchy would at once cease to be a despotism. The Government would not be in the English sense representative; but it would have some affinity to the Government of Venice. The authority of the King would be tempered and controlled by a powerful and independent magistracy, partly concentrated in the metropolis, partly diffused through, and in some sense representing, the different provinces. If, on the other hand, the claims of the Parliaments were overthrown, the Government of France was essentially a pure autocracy.

The question was now brought clearly to an issue. 'If they succeed,' writes Barbier, 'in diminishing the authority and the pretended rights of Parliament, there will no longer be any obstacle to a solid despotism. If, on the other hand, the Parliaments unite to resist by strong measures, this can only be followed by a general revolution in the State.'[1] In March 1766, the Parliament of Paris having issued a decree protesting against the arrest and trial of some members of the Parliament of Brittany, the King appeared in person in the Parliament, and ordered the decree to be expunged from their records. He informed the magistrates that this affair in no way concerned them. He accused

[1] Rocquain, p. 240.

them of disregarding the fundamental rights of the Crown in pretending that they formed with the other Parliaments of the kingdom an indivisible body which was the representative of the nation and participated with the monarch in making the laws; and he proceeded in the most emphatic and explicit terms to affirm that the monarchy of France was an absolute and unlimited despotism. 'It is in my person alone,' he said, 'that the sovereign power resides. It is from me alone that my Courts derive their existence and their authority; it is to me alone that the legislative power belongs without dependence and without division; the whole public order emanates from me;' and he concluded by threatening that if the Parliament continued the scandal of opposing his will, he would find himself obliged to employ the power he had received from God, to preserve his people from the fatal consequences of such attempts.[1]

It would be impossible to speak more plainly. In the face of the intense intellectual and political life that was now agitating the nation, in a country which boasted that it was at the head of civilisation, and addressing a great judicial body which was said to be as ancient as the monarchy itself, the King of France claimed a power which was essentially that of an Oriental despot. And the Sovereign who used this language was not a Cæsar, a Frederick, or a Napoleon. He was contemptible in his abilities, sunk in sloth and in degrading vice, and he spoke not in the moment of victory or of brilliant prosperity, but at a time when his country was reduced by bad government to the verge of bankruptcy, and still lay under the shadow of a disastrous war and of an ignominious peace. Yet this language represented real power, and it was only the

[1] Rocquain, pp. 255, 256.

precursor of corresponding action. A few more years of altercations, remonstrances, resignations, imprisonments, exiles, and vacillations ensued, but at last the blow was struck. The occasion was the trial of the Duke of Aiguillon, who, having been accused of gross abuses in the government of Brittany, had asked for a trial before the Court of Peers, and had accordingly by the King's orders been arraigned before the Parliament of Paris. The trial began in April 1770. When it had proceeded in its regular course for rather more than two months, the King intervened, annulled the proceedings by letters patent, and declared the Duke exonerated from every charge. The Parliament retaliated by declaring that the Duke rested under grave suspicion, and forbidding him to exercise any of the functions of the peerage, till he was formally acquitted. The King at once annulled the sentence, and going down to the Parliament he carried away the registers of the trial.

The period of vacation followed, and soon the provincial Parliaments rallied round the Parliament of Paris and pronounced these proceedings a gross infringement of parliamentary rights. But the Chancellor Maupeou, who now guided the counsels of the King, was prepared to carry the strife to extremities. On December 7 a new bed of justice was held, and the Chancellor read to the Parliament a royal edict, in which the King declared that 'he held his crown from God alone, that to him alone, without dependence or partition, belonged the legislative power, that the custom of making representations to him must not be converted by the magistrates into a right of resistance, that these representations had their limits, and that they could place none to his authority.' He accused the magistrates of systematic opposition to the royal will and to his prerogative, and he peremptorily forbade the Par-

liaments of France by the use of the terms 'unity,' 'indivisibility,' and 'classes' to describe themselves as a single body. He declared this doctrine seditious. He forbade all correspondence between the Parliaments of the kingdom, all joint resignations and all delays in registering the royal edicts, and he threatened, if these offences were committed, that the guilty magistrates should be deprived of their offices and punished as rebels. After vain though angry remonstrances, this edict was transcribed in the registers.

The magistrates, insulted and branded before the country, had but one last remedy—that of refusing to perform their judicial functions. Four times the King ordered them to resume these functions, and four times they refused unless they received a pledge that the laws of France would be maintained, and the late edict revoked. The struggle was ended by a *coup d'état*. On the night of January 20, 1771, soldiers appeared by the bedside of every magistrate, demanding their signature to a paper stating whether or not they would resume their functions. A few, terror-stricken at the thought of imprisonment and exile, at first yielded, but afterwards recanted, while the great majority refused. A royal decree was then issued from the Council, exiling the magistrates, confiscating their offices, declaring them and their children incapable of filling any judicial post. The Parliament of Paris was absolutely suppressed, and six new courts of justice appointed by the King were created in its place. The 'Cour des Aides,' which refused to recognise the new authority, was suppressed. Its magistrates were driven by soldiers from the bench, and their President Malesherbes —the same who in after years so nobly distinguished himself by his defence of Lewis XVI.—was exiled. The Chatelet was reorganised and made completely subservient to the Crown, and at the end of the year

the work was completed by the suppression of the provincial Parliaments. One great act of the contest that led to the Revolution was thus terminated, and the royal authority remained triumphant, and absolute in France.

As might have been expected, public opinion was excited by these events. Large bodies of troops were assembled in the capital, and the new authorities put under strong military protection. Innumerable seditious placards and other writings appeared. Most of the subordinate courts of justice protested. The Cour des Aides and the Parliament of Rouen distinguished themselves by demanding a convocation of the States-General to decide the question at issue between the King and the magistracy. With a single exception, the princes of the blood were opposed to the policy of the King, and six of them, headed by the Duke of Orleans, and followed by thirteen peers of France, drew up a protest against the recent violence, declaring that 'it had ever been the right of the princes and peers of France to be judged only by the first and indestructible Corporation of the nation, and by judges who were by right immovable.' Placards and anonymous letters urged the Duke of Orleans to put himself at the head of a revolution, and it was the opinion of a well-informed contemporary observer,[1] that if at this time a leader had been found, a most formidable rebellion might have broken out.[2] Mlle. Genest, who was afterwards Mme. de Campan, had become reader at the Court in 1767, and she tells us that twenty years before 1789 it had become a common subject of discourse, that the institutions of the ancient monarchy were falling into ruin,

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[1] Hardy.

[2] See on this whole history Sismondi, *Hist. des Français*, xx. 403-425; Rocquain, *L'Esprit Révolutionnaire avant la Révolution*, pp. 282–297.

and that the century would not close without some great revolution in France.[1]

The fact, however, remains that this great change, which swept away the last semblance of constitutional opposition and control in France, was effected by royal authority without the effusion of a drop of blood. It made a deep impression both in France and in other countries; from this time the predictions of revolution, which during the preceding years had been so frequent, almost absolutely ceased, and they did not again acquire any importance till the convocation of the Notables in 1787. On both sides of the Channel it had long been the custom to contrast the loyalty or servility of the French to their Sovereign with the insubordination and jealousy of the English,[2] and the destruction, with-

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[1] *Mém. sur la Vie de Marie-Antoinette*, par Mme de Campan, avant propos

[2] See some striking examples of this in Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, i. 689, and Taine's *Ancien Régime*, p. 15 An intelligent English traveller named Moore, who visited France towards the close of the reign of Louis XV., gives many illustrations of the semi-adoration with which the French seemed then to regard their king, and adds this curious prediction 'The philosophical idea that kings have been appointed for public convenience, that they are accountable to their subjects for maladministration and for continued acts of injustice and oppression, is a doctrine very opposite to the general prejudices of this nation. If any of their kings were to behave in such an imprudent and outrageous manner as to occasion a revolt, and if the insurgents actually got the better, I question if they would think of new modelling the Government, and limiting the power of the Crown, as was done in Britain at the Revolution, so as to prevent the like abuses for the future. They would never think of going further, I imagine, than placing another prince of the Bourbon family on the throne, with the same power that his predecessors had, and then quietly lay down their arms satisfied with his royal word or declaration to govern with more equity. The French seem so delighted and dazzled with the lustre of monarchy, that they cannot bear the thought of any qualifying mixture which might abate its violence.' —Moore's *Travels in France, &c.* (5th ed.), i. 44, 45. D'Argenson writes: 'Louis XV est chéri de son peuple, sans lui avoir fait aucun bien . . . regardons en cela

out a serious effort of resistance, of an institution which had existed for many centuries, and which alone distinguished the French Government from pure despotism, appeared to contemporary observers to show that no real opposition to royal authority was possible in France. To foreigners, indeed, who could not follow the minor currents of passion and opinion, the submission seemed even greater than it was. The account of the event in the 'Annual Register' is peculiarly interesting, as it is almost certainly from the pen of Burke. 'The noble efforts,' he writes, 'of that faithful repository of the laws, and remembrancer of the ancient rights of the people, the Parliament of Paris, in the cause of liberty and mankind, have fatally terminated in its own final destruction. . . . That ancient spirit from which the Franks derive their name, though still gloriously alive in the breasts of a few, no longer exists in the bulk of the people. Long dazzled with the splendour of a magnificent and voluptuous Court, with the glare of a vast military power, and with the glory of some great monarchs, they cannot now, in the grave light of the shade, behold things in their natural state; nor can those who have been long used to submit without inquiry to every act of power . . . suddenly acquire that strength and tenor of mind, which is alone capable of forming great resolutions and of undertaking arduous and dangerous tasks. Thus has this great revolution in the history and government of France taken place without the smallest commotion, or without the opposition that in other periods would have attended an infraction of the heritable jurisdiction of a petty vassal.'[1]

nos Français comme le peuple le plus porté à l'amour des rois qui sera jamais. Il pénètre leur caractère, il prend les intentions pour l'action.'—D'Argenson, *Mém.* iv. 167. In the description of the French character given long after (art. 'Caractère') in the *Encyclopædia*, 'l'amour de leurs rois et de la monarchie même' has a prominent place.

[1] *Annual Register*, 1771, p. 89.

The public feeling on the question was stronger than Burke imagined, but the Parliament had powerful enemies. The courtiers and the priests detested it, while, on the other hand, Voltaire, separating himself on this occasion from what was undoubtedly the popular opinion, warmly and repeatedly expressed his approval of the act of the Government. In his eyes any political merits the Parliaments might possess were much more than counteracted by the hostility they had shown to toleration and to reform. As late as 1762 a young Protestant minister named Rochette had by order of the Parliament of Toulouse been hanged in his shirt, with head and feet naked, 'for having performed the functions of a minister of the so-called reformed Church,' and it was the same Parliament which had been guilty of the atrocious judicial murder of Calas. The Parliament of Paris had borne a leading part in the earlier persecutions of the Huguenots; it had instituted an annual procession in honour of the massacre of St. Bartholomew; it had steadily persecuted the party of freethinkers and burnt their books; it had come forward conspicuously in condemning loans upon interest, and in opposing the practice of inoculation, and it was responsible for the recent disgraceful sentences against La Barre and against Lally.[1] The abolition of the venality of judicial posts, which Voltaire had long desired, was decreed when the Parliament was abolished,

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I have already noticed Burke's warm eulogy of the remonstrances of the French Parliaments, expressed in his *Observations on the State of the Nation.* His admiration for the Parliament of Paris was very steady. Almost in the last words he uttered in public—in the magnificent peroration to his magnificent reply on the Hastings impeachment—he introduced a noble eulogy of it.

[1] Sismondi, *Histoire des Français,* xx. 325–327; Mme. de Staël, *Cons. sur la Révolution,* i. 140.

and the multiplication of courts of justice was considered a real reform.

One of the most important results of the suppression of the Parliaments was that the opposition to the Court fell almost exclusively into the hands of men of letters, who had no practical experience in the conduct of affairs. Political writings immensely multiplied, and political speculation acquired a greatly increased importance. The events which have been hitherto recorded belong strictly to French history, but political doctrines at this time acquired an ascendency in France which speedily influenced surrounding countries, and was nowhere felt more powerfully than in England. Voltaire was now a very old man, and, though still in the zenith of his fame, his influence had greatly declined. He was looked upon as belonging to a bygone generation, and both religious and political thought had taken forms with which he had no sympathy. Believing that natural religion was not only true, but indispensably necessary to the well-being of society, he detested the aggressive atheism which had arisen, and on one occasion, when Condorcet and D'Alembert expressed such opinions at a supper party, Voltaire ordered his servants to leave the room, saying that he did not choose them to hear such doctrines, as he had no desire to be robbed or murdered. On the other hand, he had a complete contempt both for speculative and democratic politics. His aim, as he once said, was not to make a revolution like that of Luther or Calvin, but to enlighten the minds of the rulers of men. He totally disbelieved in popular political judgments, and emphatically denied to his own countrymen, and especially to the Parisians, the qualities of wisdom and sobriety that are necessary for self-government. But a new star had now arisen in the sphere of political thought. The diseased but

splendid genius of Rousseau was acquiring that complete ascendency which it retained undiminished for many years. His wonderful eloquence, in which passion and reason were so finely blended, appealed with a transcendent force to the imaginations and the feelings of his contemporaries; and if Voltaire continued to be the favourite of good society, of the critic, the literary epicurean, and the sceptic, Rousseau had an immeasurably stronger influence over a far larger section of the French people.[1]

It is a well-known saying of Napoleon, that if Rousseau had never lived, there would have been no French Revolution; and in spite of its manifest exaggeration, there is a sense in which this saying is not without plausibility. That which distinguishes the French Revolution from other political movements is, that it was directed by men who had adopted certain speculative, *à priori* conceptions of political right, with the fanaticism and proselytising fervour of a religious belief, and the Bible of their creed was the 'Contrat Social' of Rousseau.

The doctrine of the social contract was, indeed, far from new. It had been fully and ably expounded by Locke, and it may be found before Locke in the writings of Hooker, of the Jesuits, and of St. Thomas Aquinas. Society, according to the English Whig doctrine of the Revolution, was originally formed for the protection of the lives and properties of those who composed it, and who would otherwise have been perpetually at the mercy of the strongest. Its first object is that every man should be enabled to live in peace and security as long as he does not molest his neighbour, and to enjoy with-

[1] See an extremely able discussion of the influence of the philosophers, but especially of Voltaire and Rousseau on the Revolution, by Mallet du Pan, *Mercure Britannique*, ii. 342-370.

out disturbance the property which he has honestly acquired either by his own industry or by the favour of others. To attain these ends it is necessary for men to agree upon certain settled laws which are to be the standard of right and wrong in the community, the common measure deciding their controversies. It is also necessary to create an organisation which can execute and enforce these laws, and punish those who infringe them. This cannot be done without expense, and as the object is one of common interest, it must be supported by common contributions. Everyone who enjoys a share of the protection, should pay his proportion out of his estate, and this should be as far as possible levied by his own consent. Unanimous consent, indeed, is practically impossible, but the consent of the majority by themselves or their deputies should be obtained. There is, however, such a thing as the consent of acquiescence, and there is such a thing as virtual representation, and all that is really necessary is that the acts of the Government should tend to the benefit, and express the wishes, of the whole community. The true theory of taxation is that society is a great joint-stock company in which all have shares, some more and some less, and it is right that all should be taxed at the same rate, and that each should pay in proportion to the number of his shares.[1] The community has many and complex relations to external bodies, and it is found that in addition to the protection of life and property, there are within the country itself many ends useful to the whole body, which can be better accomplished by the machinery of government than by any other means, and in this manner the action of government is gradually extended. But the protection of property and the pursuance of common interests by

[1] Thiers, *La Propriété*.

common consent lie at the basis of the whole conception of the State, and no measures which are inconsistent with these primary ends of government can be obligatory.

Such, in a very few lines, was the substance of that Whig philosophy which was elaborated, chiefly by Locke, in opposition to the Tory theory of the divine right of kings, and which generally prevailed in England during the eighteenth century. It is open to considerable criticism both from an historical and from a logical point of view, and no Government has ever strictly acted up to its requirements; but on the whole it furnishes an excellent working theory for free governments, a general criterion by which their aims and principles may be tested. It is altogether inconsistent with absolute monarchy; it establishes, as far as a doctrine can, the indefeasible right of every man to his own property, subject to the obligation of contributing his proportion to the expenses of its protection and to the other common interests of society, and it guards against the general and most subtle vice of all governments, the subordination of the common interests to the interests of a class. At the same time, as Burke was never weary of urging, speculation has had only a slight part in directing the course of English politics. There have been fundamental laws, old traditional customs and understandings, numerous institutions representing with more or less fidelity the different interests, classes, and opinions in the country, and determining by their balance the preponderance of political power and the tendencies of political development. It is when one power has unduly encroached upon the others, when old laws or traditional observances are strained or violated, when a conflict arises between the public opinion of the nation and some of its institutions, when classes or interests or opinions have grown up which find no ade-

quate recognition in the old framework of the Government, when in a word some practical grievance or uneasiness has disclosed itself, that changes are usually effected. And these changes have been commonly enlargements or modifications of existing institutions, made by practical politicians in obedience to the strong pressure of opinion, with very little regard to symmetry, logic, or consistency, but with the object of remedying particular grievances or satisfying particular wants. Speculative writers have afterwards defended them on general principles, but these have been to a great extent afterthoughts.

In France, however, the course of events was entirely different. Absolute monarchy having destroyed almost every organisation that could become a centre of opposition, and having prevented the growth of a school of practical and experienced reformers, politics came to be treated like a problem of geometry or ethics, to be worked out on general principles, with a complete disregard to the traditions and special circumstances of the nation. In Rousseau, the French found one of the most eloquent and seductive political writers who have ever lived, and he furnished the archetype or pattern on which the revolutionary school endeavoured to build. The 'Contrat Social' ranks with the 'Wealth of Nations' as one of the two political works of the eighteenth century which have had the greatest practical influence upon public affairs; but while the influence of Adam Smith has been almost entirely for good, the political influence of Rousseau appears to me to have been almost wholly evil.

The first great characteristic of the theory of Rousseau, is the distinction which he draws between sovereignty and government. Sovereignty in every country resides in the whole mass of the population, and no government is morally legitimate, which does not rest

upon a decision in which the whole nation takes part. The sovereign power is compelled, by the nature of things, to construct governments for the purpose of carrying on its affairs; but its sovereignty can never be fully or even partially alienated. It is absolutely inalienable. Neither conquest nor any kind of compact can affect it, and governments subsist only as its agents.

The inferences drawn from this proposition are as much opposed to the English notions of constitutional government, as they are to absolute monarchy. In the first place, the English theory of representative government is wholly erroneous. 'The sovereignty cannot be represented, for the same reason that it cannot be alienated, because it consists essentially in the general will. The deputies of the people are not, and cannot be, its representatives; they are only its agents. They can conclude nothing definitely. Every law is null, which the people have not directly ratified. It wants the true character of a law. The English people imagines itself free; but it is wholly mistaken. It is free only during the election of its members of Parliament. Once they are elected, it is a slave. The idea of representatives is modern; it comes to us from the feudal government, from that iniquitous and absurd government which degraded the human species.'[1]

This doctrine has a manifest affinity to that which we have already traced among the Radicals of the school of Horne Tooke and Sawbridge, who maintained that members of Parliament were simply delegates, that their constituents should furnish them with binding instructions, and had a right to dictate authoritatively their conduct on every question that arose. No English Radical, however, had asserted that every law was

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[1] *Con. Soc.* iii. c. 15.

invalid, which had not been directly ratified by a popular vote.

A very important doctrine of the British Constitution is that the Sovereign, or supreme magistrate of the State, like all other magistrates, is invested with a political power which is at once guaranteed, defined, and limited by contract. In opposition to the theory of the divine right of kings, the statesmen of the English Revolution placed the royal power in England in the hands of a dynasty, which received by parliamentary authority hereditary right to rule, subject to clearly defined conditions. Certain fundamental obligations were laid down by law, and the Sovereign swore that he would fulfil them. If he broke his compact with his subjects, they in their turn were released from their allegiance. As it was possible that a sovereign without breaking any fundamental law might desire to act in a way very injurious to the State, his power was so limited by the two Houses of Parliament, that his political action, if contrary to the national will, is speedily checked by obstacles which cannot be constitutionally surmounted. If, however, the Sovereign fulfilled the conditions of his trust, he reigned by a full and perfect right; it was made a crime of the first magnitude to impugn his authority, and in this manner the society, while guarding its own freedom, maintained the dignity of its ruler, and secured for itself the incalculable advantage of stability and continuity in the Government.

In opposition to this doctrine, Rousseau maintained that there can be no contract whatever between the sovereign nation and its rulers or magistrates; that such a contract, though it may be expressed in words, embodied in oaths, and enrolled in the statute book, is absolutely null. 'The sovereign authority can be no more modified than alienated. To limit it is to destroy it. There can only be one contract in the State, the

original contract of association, and this alone excludes all others.' From the highest to the lowest, every functionary of the Government depends upon the immediate will of the people, is bound absolutely to obey them, and may at any time be arbitrarily dismissed. Such a course may not be expedient; but it is always legitimate. 'If the people institutes hereditary government, either monarchical in a family, or aristocratical in an order of citizens, this is not an engagement which it takes. It is a provisional form which it gives to the Administration, until it pleases it to ordain otherwise.'[1]

Voltaire, commenting on these passages, described them with great truth as nothing less than 'a code of anarchy,'[2] and Burke has devoted some admirable pages to exposing their fallacies and their dangers. 'By this unprincipled facility,' he wrote, 'in changing the State as often, and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies and fashions, the whole chain of continuity of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer.'[3]

A few more extracts will complete our view of this side of the teaching of Rousseau. In the first place, every member of the community has a natural and inalienable right to vote in every act of sovereignty, and as all laws are acts of sovereignty, those only are valid which have been directly sanctioned by universal suffrage, the majority binding the minority.[4] 'The moment the Government usurps the sovereignty, the social compact is broken, and all the simple citizens regaining by right their natural liberty are forced, but not morally obliged, to obey.'[5] 'Whenever the people are lawfully

[1] *Cont. Soc.* iii. c. 16–18.

[2] *Idées Républicaines.*

[3] *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

[4] *Cont. Soc.* iii. c. 12–15, iv. c. 1, 2.

[5] Ibid. iii. c. 10.

assembled in a sovereign body, all the jurisdiction of Government ceases, and the executive power is suspended.'[1]

It will be evident to anyone who has grasped the full meaning of these doctrines, that they would invalidate the legislation and the authority of every Government in Europe, with perhaps the exception of those small Swiss cantons, where the whole people assemble to make their laws; and it is also evident that they would make all settled government impossible, and all authority precarious, and would multiply incalculably the opportunities and temptations of change. This was one aspect of the teaching of Rousseau. But if his doctrines led on the one side to utter anarchy, they led on the other, not less clearly, to the most grinding tyranny. For the first condition of the social compact is, 'the total alienation of each associate, with all his rights, to the whole community.' 'As nature gives each man absolute power over his own limbs, so the social contract gives the body politic absolute power over its members,' and makes it 'the master of all their possessions.' 'The right of each individual to his own property is always subordinated to the right of the community to the whole.'[2]

The most efficient check which has been discovered in a free country against the tyranny, either of individuals or of majorities, is found in a strong representation of classes and interests. Montesquieu had especially insisted upon the importance of checks of this kind. Rousseau utterly repudiated them. The unity, the indivisibility, the homogeneity of the sovereign power is one of his favourite tenets. The existence of any separate orders or interests in the community, any division, restriction, or balance of

[1] *Cont. Soc.* iii. c. 14.

[2] Ibid. i. c. 6, 9, ii. 4.

power, he emphatically rejects. The absolute equality of all members of the body politic is one of his great doctrines. The absolute authority of the body politic, as expressed by universal suffrage, over its members is another.

I have already mentioned the religious policy which he deduced from these principles—the civil religion which he desired to impose, on pain of banishment or death, on every member of the community, the proposed expulsion from the State of all who held the doctrine of exclusive salvation. Opinions in as far as they relate exclusively to another world are, he admits, beyond the competence of the legislator; but whenever they appear likely to affect the conduct of men as members of the State, they should be brought under civil control. 'Whenever the clergy form a distinct body, that body is master and legislator in their country. There are, therefore, two powers, two sovereigns in England and in Russia, as elsewhere. Of all Christian writers, the philosopher Hobbes alone saw rightly the evil and the remedy, when he dared to propose to unite the two heads of the eagle, and bring everything back to that political unity, without which no State or Government will ever be well constituted.'[1]

On the subject of education, his views are very similar. The father should be wholly lost in the citizen. It is for the State to prescribe the form and substance of education, and even the amusements of the young, and, as in the Republic of Plato, to mould their minds systematically to its ends.[2]

Such sentiments fell in perfectly with the prevailing tendencies of French thought. It is not necessary here to enter into any discussion of the theory, which attri-

[1] *Cont. Soc.* iv. c. 8.

[2] *Gouvernement de Pologne*, c. 4; *Emile*, liv. iv.; *Discours sur l'Économie Polit.*

butes to the Latin as distinguished from the Teutonic race a special tendency towards centralisation and unity. It is at least abundantly evident why such a tendency should have prevailed in France, and prevailed in it to a much greater degree than in the other Latin nations. Italy had been for many centuries divided into separate principalities differing widely in their character and government, and it contained several cities which were so illustrious from their art, history, commerce, or literature, that even the supreme majesty of Rome was unable to reduce them to moral insignificance. The provinces of Spain differed profoundly in their histories, characters, and institutions, and in Spain a large measure of local and provincial self-government had survived the loss of political freedom. But France was a highly centralised despotism, and Paris had no rival or counterpoise in its attractive influence. France, too, was a great military monarchy. The habits and ideals of military life coloured the whole thought of the nation, and the lines of national character were still further deepened by the unifying, organising, and intensely intolerant spirit of the Catholic Church. The result of this combination of influences has been, that the French political ideal has remained substantially unaltered amid the most violent changes of Government. Alike under the despotism of Lewis XIV. and under the despotism of the Convention, it has been the great object of French statesmen to attain a complete unity of type; to expel or subdue all interests, elements, and influences, that do not assimilate with the prevailing spirit of the Government; to mould in a single die, to concentrate on a single end, all the forces of the nation.

The English political ideal has been essentially different. 'I know but one policy,' said one of the writers of the time of the English Revolution, 'whereby to establish any Government, of what sort soever it be,

which is to take away all causes of complaint, and make all the subjects easy under it, for then the Government will have the whole strength of the people in its defence, whenever it shall want it.'[1] English statesmen have commonly aimed at a Government, in which different interests, opinions, and classes, may expand as much as possible unmolested, and without friction or restraint, and in which the hand of authority is felt as lightly, and as rarely, as possible. They have believed that the largest sum of human happiness and useful performance, the highest level of self-reliance, the broadest foundations of stability and content, are likely to be attained, when each member of the community is given the fullest latitude and opportunity of pursuing the course which seems to him most fit, of gratifying as far as possible his tastes and idiosyncrasies, and even his weaknesses and prejudices, as long as he does not injure his neighbour. The virtue of the English Government has lain much less in the concentration of the national power, and the expulsion of hostile or heterogeneous elements, than in the strengthening by freedom of the spontaneous energies of the nation; in a diffused sense of security and comfort, and in the attachment to the Government which it produces.

As a consequence of this theory, there has been very little symmetry, or unity of plan, in English government. When competing interests or principles cannot both be fully satisfied, they are appeased by illogical but practical compromise. Many different types of institution directed to the same ends exist simultaneously. The main principles of measures are qualified. Schemes of policy are deflected now in this direction, now in that, to satisfy as far as possible eccentric forms of opinion, and while the general scope of a measure is governed

[1] Somers *Tracts*, xii. 242.

by the wish of the majority, particular provisions are nearly always introduced to disarm the hostility, and satisfy the desires, of minorities.

The practical effects, however, of this characteristic of English politics have been greatly qualified by another influence, which like the foregoing is wholly foreign to the general tenor of the philosophy of Rousseau. It is the strong conservative instinct, which in England endeavours to preserve a continuity of national life, by governing mainly under the forms, and through the institutions, of the past. Never to destroy an institution which works well; to keep up institutions if they discharge efficiently secondary uses even though their original and primary uses have become wholly obsolete; to remove abuses, and introduce changes according to immediate necessities, and not according to any settled plan, have been among the most permanent maxims of English politics. And the result has been the maintenance of an immense heritage of the past, which, though it does not any longer act in the way of restriction, does undoubtedly act in the way of bias and privilege. Opinions and modes of life may all develop themselves; but they do not develop on the same plane, and with equal advantages. The restraining hand of authority is little felt; but the ecclesiastical and aristocratical institutions of the past, with their vast ramifications, their multifarious social, educational, political, and economical influences, form deep grooves or channels, and in a very large measure determine the current of English life.

The destruction of the controlling influence of aristocracies, and of all local bodies, had produced upon the Continent a steadily increasing concentration of political authority; and exaggerations of the powers and functions of government scarcely less extreme than those of Rousseau may be found in the writings of

Bossuet, and of the chief lawyers of the monarchy. In the case of Rousseau, however, this exaggeration was largely due to his adoption of the old Greek doctrine that the sphere of government is co-extensive with that of moral education,[1] and especially to his admiration for the institutions of Lycurgus at Sparta, and of Calvin at Geneva. Its evil effects were greatly increased by his persuasion that man is born good; that all his vices, and nearly all his calamities, are the result of external circumstances; that government is principally responsible for them, and that it may be made the instrument of raising him to almost ideal happiness.

At the same time, though the political theory of the 'Contrat Social' was plain, logical, and consistent, and was accepted by great multitudes of Frenchmen in its broad and obvious signification, Rousseau himself recoiled from many of the conclusions that were drawn from it, and he tried, sometimes with much inconsistency, to evade or attenuate them. His book, he said, was simply an abstract or ideal theory of politics. His principles were exactly the same as those of Locke. His model was substantially the aristocratic republic of Geneva.[2] He had drawn an ideal picture of a free nation; but he acknowledged that he did not see how

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[1] 'Formez donc des hommes si vous voulez commander à des hommes. . . . C'étoit là le grand art des Gouvernemens anciens, dans ces tems reculés où les philosophes donnoient des loix aux peuples et n'employoient leur autorité qu'à les rendre sages et heureux. De là tant de loix somptuaires, tant de règlemens sur les mœurs, tant de maximes publiques admises ou rejetées avec le plus grand soin. Les tyrans mêmes n'oublioient pas cette importante partie de l'administration, et on les voyoit attentifs à corrompre les mœurs de leurs esclaves avec autant de soin qu'en avoient les magistrats à corriger celles de leurs concitoyens. Mais nos gouvernemens modernes, qui croient avoir tout fait quand ils ont tiré de l'argent, n'imaginent pas même qu'il soit nécessaire ou possible d'aller jusques là.'—*Discours sur l'Economie politique.*

[2] See his *Lettres de La Montagne*, especially letter vi.

the sovereign people could preserve its rights except in a very small state, in which all the citizens could assemble to legislate.[1] In his 'Considerations on the Government of Poland,' he admitted the validity of legislation by representatives, provided they were controlled by imperative mandates.[2] While maintaining under all forms of government the inalienable sovereignty of the nation, his sympathies were not with the democratic form. 'A democratic government,' he says, 'is suitable for small, an aristocratic government for moderate, a monarchical government for great states.' 'A democratic or popular government is more subject than any other to civil wars and internal agitations, for there is no other government which tends so strongly and so constantly to change its form, and which requires more vigilance and courage to maintain.' 'If there were a people of gods, they would govern themselves as a democracy. So perfect a form of government is not suited for men.' 'It is contrary to the order of nature, that the many should govern, and the few be governed.' 'The best and most natural order is, that the wise should govern the multitude, provided one is sure that they govern it for the profit of the multitude, and not for their own.'[3] 'Government belongs to the small number, the superintendence of government to the people at large.' 'There is no freedom where anyone is above the law; but a people is free, whatever may be the form of its government, when it recognises in the ruler, not the man, but the organ of the law.'[4] In one of his letters he says that 'the two main principles of

[1] *Contrat Social*, iii. c. 15.

[2] *Gouvern. de Pol.* c. 7.

[3] *Contrat Social*, iii. c. 3, 4, 5. Montesquieu had long before said: 'La propriété naturelle des petits états est d'être gouvernés en république, celle des médiocres d'être soumis à un monarque, celle des grands empires d'être dominés par un despote.'—*Esp. des Lois*, viii. c. 20.

[4] *Lettres de La Montagne.*

government established in the "Contrat Social" are, that the sovereignty always belongs legitimately to the people, and that aristocratic government is the best.'[1]

He shows also in many places a great desire to qualify his very dangerous doctrine of the omnipotence of the sovereign people. The people, he says, must always act by law; and what is a law? 'It is a public and solemn declaration of the general will on an object of common interest. I say on an object of common interest, for the law would lose its force and cease to be legitimate if the object was not of importance to all.'[2] He imagined that he could guard against the dangers of a tyranny of majorities by extinguishing separate interests in politics, and arbitrarily restricting to purely common interests the sphere of the power which he had made omnipotent. 'All that each man alienates by the social compact of his power, his goods, and his liberty, is the portion of which the use is required by the community;' 'but,' he adds, 'it must be acknowledged that the Sovereign alone is the judge of this requirement.' When, however, the people of Athens decreed penalties or honours to particular individuals, it acted not as a sovereign, but as a magistrate. 'By the nature of the social compact every act of sovereignty, that is, every authentic act of the general will, binds or favours equally all the citizens, so that the Sovereign knows only the body of the nation, and does not distinguish any of those who compose it. . . . The act of sovereignty is not a convention of a superior with an inferior, but a convention of the body with each of its

[1] To Marcel (1762), *Correspondance*, ii. 78. So he elsewhere says: 'Le meilleur des Gouvernemens est l'aristocratique. La pire des souverainetés est l'aristocratique.'—*Lettres de La Montagne*, letter vi.

[2] *Lettres de La Montagne*, letter vi.

members. It is legitimate, because it is based on the social compact; equitable, because it is common to all; useful, because it can have no other object than the general good. . . . It cannot pass the boundaries of general conventions, and every man can freely possess the goods and the liberty which these conventions have left him; so that the Sovereign has never a right to burden one subject more than another, for then the affair becomes individual, and his power is no longer competent.'[1]

In his article on political economy in the 'Encyclopædia,' following exactly in the steps of Locke, he says that 'the foundation of the social compact is property, and that its first condition is that every individual should be protected in the peaceful enjoyment of that which belongs to him.' 'The right of property' he describes as 'the most sacred of all rights of citizens, in some respects even more important than liberty itself.' Taxation can only be legitimately imposed by the common will of the people, or by their representatives; and while he claims for the Government a great power of regulating successions, he examines the principles on which taxation should be imposed with a skill and equity that leave little to be desired. As a general principle, he maintains that taxation should be exactly proportioned to property, so that a man who possesses ten times as much as his neighbour should pay ten times more than him. But this principle should be modified by another—that there is a broad distinction between the necessaries and the superfluities of life, and that he who possesses only what is strictly necessary should pay nothing.

On the great question, however, whether the right of property existed antecedently to civil society, whether

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1 *Contrat Social*, ii. c. 4.

it was created or merely sanctioned and protected by the social contract, he shows some vacillation. In his early 'Discourse on Inequality,' copying very closely a well-known passage of Pascal, he speaks of the first man who inclosed a piece of land, and said 'This is mine,' as an impostor and usurper who founded civil society and thereby brought countless calamities upon mankind; but in the very same discourse he shows with much justice how the necessity of cultivating the soil necessarily led to private property in land. In one passage in his 'Social Contract,' he describes this contract as 'that which changes usurpation into right,' but in many other passages he acknowledges fully a right of property anterior to the social compact, but contends that by that compact this right is under certain conditions surrendered to the community, and tries to show that these conditions were such as to preclude the danger of inequitable taxation and of partial confiscation. 'If it is on the right of property,' he says, 'that the sovereign authority is founded, this right is that which ought to be most respected. It is inviolable and sacred so long as it remains a particular and individual right. As soon as it is considered as common to all the citizens, it is submitted to the general will, and that will can annihilate it. So the Sovereign has no right to touch the goods of one or of many, but may legitimately take the goods of all, as was done in Sparta in the time of Lycurgus. The abolition of debts by Solon was an illegitimate act.'[1]

The real difficulties of a system which invests a mere numerical majority with absolute power, Rousseau never faced. He states that the protection of property is a primary end of government, but realised property

[1] *Emile*, livre v. In his *Discours sur l'Economie politique* he says: 'L'administration générale n'est établie que pour assurer la propriété particulière qui lui est antérieure.'

to any considerable extent is necessarily mainly in the hands of a few; and if an overwhelming preponderance of unlimited and uncontrolled voting and taxing power is given to those who do not possess it, is it likely that this power will not be abused? Where irresistible power is given, and where interest or passion impel, it is idle to trust to the cobweb barriers of metaphysical or ethical distinctions. The assertion of Rousseau that 'the condition being equal for all, no one is interested in making it burdensome to the others,' fails almost ludicrously to represent the real facts of the case. Whether legislators like it or not, there must always be diversities and antagonisms of interests, orders, and classes; there must always be envy, jealousy, covetousness, and hatred in the State, and the supreme end of statesmanship is to give security to every interest and class. This can only be done by giving to each some share, and not too large a share, of political power. Uncontrolled power is always abused, and a class may be as effectually reduced to impotence by being swamped as by being disfranchised.

Is it probable, too, that adequate skill can be found in the legislators when no special competence is exacted from the electors who choose them? It is the inexorable law of nature, established by all the competitions of life, that sound judgment and capacity belong to the few and not to the many, and that without judgment and capacity, human affairs can never be successfully conducted. The government of a great empire, with its infinitely various and intricate characters, relations, circumstances, and wants, is one of the most difficult as well as one of the most important duties that can be imposed upon man. The qualities of mind and character it requires are so numerous, the chances of error are so great, the consequences of political miscalculation are so terrible and so enduring, that the greatest intellect

might well shrink from the task; and there is no other sphere in which superficial appearances are more often at variance with realities, or in which the distorting influence of passion is more frequently or more powerfully felt. 'Is it likely, is it conceivable, that the best and final form of human government should be that in which all power of choice and of control is ultimately vested in the least instructed, the least intelligent, and the most dependent portion of the community?

This was the system which Rousseau advocated, and which he advocated as of universal application. The shape or structure of the government might depend upon the special circumstances of the nation, but the sovereignty of the nation, its right to determine and at any moment to change its government, its right to give or refuse its sanction by universal suffrage to every law that was proposed, was absolutely inalienable. This was equally true of the rudest barbarians and of the most civilised communities, of nations which had but just emerged from centuries of despotism and of nations that had enjoyed for centuries the education of self-government. Under such a system, if it could have been maintained, the fires of the Inquisition would have burnt for at least a century after they were actually extinguished, and it is by no means certain that they would even now have been at an end. In truth, however, such theories bring their own sharp remedy, for they would speedily reduce any nation that adopted them to anarchy.

The notion that universal suffrage is an inalienable right has now become so familiar throughout Europe, that few persons realise how strange it seemed in the writings of Rousseau. It is obvious, however, that in this, as in so many other points, his disciples have proved very inconsistent, for if a vote be a matter of natural right it is impossible to justify the exclusion

from the franchise, of females, who form half the population. In neither of the English-speaking communities had this theory received any countenance. The right of voting was always treated in them as a strictly civil right, to be regulated by each society in the manner most conducive to its interests. In England, the qualification for the counties differed from the qualification in the boroughs, and in these latter the right of voting was extremely various, ranging from a suffrage which was nearly universal, to a suffrage which placed the election of a borough member in two or three hands. And this variety of qualification was far from being regarded by the more enlightened statesmen of the eighteenth century as an anomaly or an abuse. It was, on the contrary, defended as one of the great merits of the Constitution. It is of the highest importance, it was urged, that the House of Commons should be various in its composition, containing representatives of many different orders, interests, capacities, aspirations, and opinions, and in no other way can a well-balanced and intelligent representation of the various classes and interests of society be so successfully and so easily attained as by making the electoral bodies very dissimilar. In the United States a similar policy prevailed. The subject was carefully considered by the very able men who framed the Constitution of 1787, and they deliberately determined to follow the English principle, and to leave untouched the great inequalities of suffrage prevailing in the different States. In no two State-Constitutions was the qualification of voters the same, but in all, or nearly all, a substantial property qualification was required.[1]

It would, however, be doing Rousseau a great in-

[1] Compare Story *On the American Constitution*, ii. 55–62; *The Federalist*, No. 52; Young's *Tour in France*; Pinkerton, iv. 430.

justice to suppose that he expected, preached, or desired any violent revolution. His sympathies with the wrongs of the poor were, indeed, very vivid and very generous. He sprang from among them himself. He never cared for the atmosphere of Court and fashion in which the most eminent of his literary contemporaries moved. His own life, though stained with much ignoble vice, and weak and morbid even to insanity, was at least spent in honourable poverty, and in his long pedestrian journeys he had learnt to measure the great mass of practical oppression that still rested upon the poor. He has himself described, in his own inimitable style, the effect upon his mind when he found a peasant who had given him shelter, carefully concealing every sign of comfort and well-being, lest it should expose him to the exactions of subordinate agents of the Government.[1] But violence and bloodshed of every kind were wholly alien to his character. Nor, indeed, did there seem much danger of a catastrophe, if unsophisticated human nature was as pure and as idyllic a thing as Rousseau and St. Pierre imagined. He taught, it is true—and surely with evident reason—that in periods of extreme danger, and when the ruin of the State could not otherwise be averted, it is right to create a dictatorship, and if necessary to suspend for a short time the operation of the laws.[2] But when Helvétius wrote that everything was justifiable which the public safety required, Rousseau wrote upon the margin of the page his indignant comment, 'The public safety is nothing if all the individuals are not secure.'[3] 'If it is meant that it is lawful for a

[1] *Confessions*, liv. iv.

[2] *Contrat Social*, iv. c. 6. Compare Montesquieu, 'L'usage des peuples les plus libres qui aient jamais été sur la terre, me fait croire qu'il y a des cas où il faut mettre pour un moment un voile sur la liberté, comme l'on cachait les statues des Dieux' (*Esprit des Lois*, xii. c. 19), and Pascal, 'Les Etats périraient si on ne faisait ployer souvent les lois à la nécessité.'—*Pensées*.

[3] See a note to the *Réfutation*

Government to sacrifice an innocent man for the safety of the multitude,' he elsewhere said, 'I hold this maxim to be one of the most execrable that tyranny has invented, the most false that can be promulgated, and the most directly opposed to the fundamental law of society. So far from its being right that one should perish for all, all have engaged their lives and goods for the defence of each, in order that individual weakness might be always protected by public force, and each member by the whole State.'[1] It is a memorable fact that the writer who was the idol of Robespierre, and on whose works Marat was accustomed to deliver enthusiastic commentaries, has left on record his deliberate conviction that 'the blood of a single man is more precious than the liberty of the whole human race.'[2]

It is also a most curious fact that while the leaders of the French Revolution drew from the writings of Rousseau a system of cosmopolitan politics, which, aiming at a fraternity of democracies, discarded all national traditions, boundaries, sentiments, and institutions, it was the earnest desire of Rousseau himself to accentuate to the highest degree the spirit of a distinctive and exclusive patriotism. He had much more sympathy with the small Greek republics than with the Roman Empire, and his Swiss birth and education deeply coloured his views. On no point is he more consistent in all his political writings than in his preference for small states. He believed that in them alone true liberty could be attained; that they were far more conducive than great empires to the growth of civic virtue, and that it should be a fundamental object of the legislator in each country to deepen as much as possible the distinctive national type. When Burke

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d'Helvétius. Œuvres de Rousseau (ed. 1826), xii. 59.

[1] *Discours sur l'Economie Politique.*

[2] A Mme.——, Sept. 27, 1766; *Correspondance.*

showed, in opposition to the cosmopolitanism of the Revolution, how the affections dwindle and evaporate if they are withdrawn from the immediate and natural objects of home, family, class, and country, in order to be expended in a diffused and general philanthropy, he did little more than repeat the arguments of Rousseau.[1] No writer had ever urged more powerfully that the moral fibre of nations is fatally relaxed when the spirit of an exclusive patriotism is enfeebled; that this spirit is the seed-plot of the highest virtues; that a strong and ineffaceable individuality is in each nation the best security of continued independence and liberty, and that, at least for the purpose of maintaining that individuality, everything that is local, traditional, and distinctive in institutions and manners should be carefully preserved. His treatise 'On the Government of Poland,' which is one of the most instructive of his writings, is specially devoted to this theme. 'It is national institutions,' he wrote, 'which form the genius, the character, the tastes, and the manners of a people; which give it its distinctive and exclusive type; which inspire an ardent love of country, founded on habits that can never be uprooted; which make life in other lands an intolerable burden.'[2] By the strong discipline

[1] 'Il semble que le sentiment de l'humanité s'évapore et s'affoiblisse en s'étendant sur toute la terre et que nous ne saurions être touchés des calamités de la Tartarie ou du Japon comme de celles d'un peuple Européen. Il faut en quelque manière borner et comprimer l'intérêt et la commisération pour lui donner de l'activité. . . . Il est bon que l'humanité concentrée entre les concitoyens prenne en eux une nouvelle force par l'habitude de se voir et par l'intérêt commun qui les réunit. Il est certain que les plus grands prodiges de vertu ont été produits par l'amour de la patrie. . . . Voulons-nous que les peuples soient vertueux? Commençons donc par leur faire aimer la patrie: mais comment l'aimeront-ils si la patrie n'est rien de plus pour eux que pour des étrangers et qu'elle ne leur accorde que ce qu'elle ne peut refuser à personne?'—*Disc. sur l'Economie Politique.*

[2] *Gouvern. de Pologne*, c. 3.

and organisation of government, the legislator should give the whole community the cohesion and the corporate feeling of an army. A broad distinction of privilege should separate the citizen from the alien, while education should be specially directed to strengthening national affections, and holding up national examples for imitation. Distinctive traditions, habits, institutions, dresses, and amusements should never be neglected, for they have all their part in giving strong individuality to the nation. It is curious that Rousseau and Burke, who so seldom agreed, appear to have both looked with warm favour on the Spanish bull fights.[1]

What I have written, is sufficient to show that although the works of Rousseau had an enormous influence on the French Revolution, they also contain much that is utterly and irreconcilably opposed to it, and it is probable that Rousseau would have looked with loathing and indignation on his disciples of the Convention and of the Committee of Public Safety. The name of 'country,' he once wrote, can only be odious and ridiculous where the citizens do not enjoy civil security, and where their goods, lives, and liberty are at the mercy of powerful men, and he added that as a matter of strict right the whole social compact would be dissolved if a single citizen perished who might have been succoured, if a single citizen was wrongfully kept in prison, or a single trial was conducted with manifest injustice.[2] Even the 'Contrat

[1] *Gouvern. de Pologne*, c. 3. There is nothing, so far as I know, on the subject written by Burke in his own name, but the historical portion of the *Annual Register*, after it had ceased to be written wholly by him, was for many years under his superintendence and inspection. In that of 1786 there is a most curious page on the advantages of bull fights, which had in the previous year been suppressed in Spain, except in cases where the profits were assigned to charitable or patriotic purposes.—*Ann. Reg.* 1786, p. 33.

[2] *Discours sur l'Economie Politique.*

Social' itself is in truth utterly condemnatory of the proceedings of the French Revolutionists, for one of its fundamental doctrines is, that it is essential to every act of sovereignty that it should be submitted to the free and unintimidated vote of the entire community.

An author, however, cannot choose what part of his teaching will take root in the minds of his readers. The seed will germinate which suits the soil, and men will often adopt sweeping principles and conclusions, and completely neglect all the qualifications, safeguards, and counterpoises by which they had been elaborately fenced round. No one experienced this truth more eminently than Rousseau, and few writers have had a deeper and more various influence both on the passions and the reason of their contemporaries. He has left behind him much false and overstrained sentiment, much dangerous paradox, some pages of odious and abject indecency, but also many pages which in the purity and elevation of their thought as well as in the splendour of their language are among the very noblest in French literature. Some great men owe their eminence to the fidelity and skill with which they represent the prevailing spirit of their time. Another and a smaller class owe it to the power with which they can breast the stream, advocating and representing the truths and aspects of things that had hitherto been most neglected by their contemporaries. To this class, in much of his teaching, Rousseau pre-eminently belongs. It may be said of him, as it has been admirably said of Carlyle, that he was the great alterative medicine of his time.[1] In the midst of an optimist, epicurean, sceptical, factitious, and self-complacent society, which habitually valued refinement more than nature,

[1] This admirable saying comes, I believe, from the author of many other admirable sayings—Sir Francis Doyle.

and intellect more than character, he appeared like a figure of another age, preaching a kind of belated and distorted Puritanism; denouncing the usages, tastes, and ideals of a fastidious and intellectual society; uttering words of warning which sounded through the speculation of his time like a passing bell across a marriage feast. Like Wordsworth in England, he introduced into literature a new love and appreciation for natural scenery, for country tastes, for the simpler and more domestic aspects of human life. The fashion of morbid sentiment which he produced has for the most part passed away like the Byronic ideal or the Werther sentimentality, but the strain of deeper earnestness of feeling that runs through his works, the importance he attached to the cultivation of character, and to a religious attitude of mind, were very healthy elements in the philosophy of the eighteenth century. He was among the first modern writers who maintained that every Government should treat national education as one of its most essential duties. His own work on education, though vitiated in many respects by his fundamental error of the essential goodness of man as he comes from the hands of Nature, gave a powerful impulse to education throughout Europe, and it is to the 'Emile' of Rousseau that we mainly owe the great reforms of Pestalozzi. But the political principles which he planted so deeply in European society appear to me to have produced an amount of evil which it is not easy to over-estimate. His disciples inferred from his writings that no government is legitimate, which is not in accordance with the fluctuating wishes of a simple majority of the nation; that political power is not a trust but a right; that absolute political equality is the first principle of all just government; that all limitations of the sovereign power should be abolished; that the government of nations can be treated as a matter

of speculation and abstract reasoning with little or no regard to traditions, antecedents, and special circumstances, and these doctrines are the true essence of the revolutionary spirit throughout Europe.

They have never been carried out consistently to all their consequences. No sane politician would apply any considerable part of them to the uncivilised portions of the world. Some of them are manifestly incompatible with any settled government; while, on the other hand, the restrictions by which Rousseau endeavoured to prevent their more dangerous results have been easily swept away by the strong currents of popular interest and passion. It is very remarkable that the States-General of 1789, which assembled at a time when the worship of Rousseau was at its highest point, and which consisted chiefly of his devoted disciples, signally violated one of the first principles of his philosophy, by pronouncing the binding instructions of their constituents null and void, and by asserting their own competence to act in opposition to them. Had they not done so, the Revolution might have taken a different turn, for these instructions expressly bound the members to respect the monarchy and the essential portions of the ancient institutions of France.[1]

At the same time the doctrines of Rousseau had an enormous practical influence during the Revolution, and they have since then passed very widely into the political thought and habits of the leading nations of Europe. Their influence, it is true, is not wholly or mainly due to anything which Rousseau has written. It has been a consequence of advancing democracy, and it is a proof of the sagacity with which Rousseau divined its tendencies as well as furnished its doctrines. The Referendum in Switzerland, according to which any

[1] *Mém. de Malouet*, ii. 265, 266.

proposed legislative measure may, on the demand of 30,000 citizens or of eight cantons, be submitted to the direct vote of the whole people; the Napoleonic plebiscite, which submitted the form of government to a direct and universal vote; the establishment of manhood suffrage over a great part of Europe; the growing habit of treating representatives as simple delegates and binding their judgment by detailed and constant instructions, as well as the manifest decline of the hereditary principle in government, all belong to the philosophy of Rousseau.

The same influence may be seen in other forms. The system of balancing orders, interests, and opinions, and guarding against the tyranny of majorities and classes by artificial restrictions of law or custom, was long considered an essential part of English freedom. It supplies the explanation and the defence of a great part of the irregularities and apparent anomalies of the British Constitution. Its importance was one of the cardinal articles of the creed of Burke, and it was acted upon with singular ability and consistency by the men who founded the Constitution of the United States. In order to guard against the tyranny and the instability which are the characteristic dangers of democracy, they established organic laws which the two Houses of Congress cannot override, and a supreme and independent tribunal which has a right to determine what things are beyond their competence, and they introduced articles into the Constitution forbidding any change in the organic laws except on the proposal of two-thirds of both Houses of Congress or of the Legislatures of two-thirds of the States, and requiring for the final enactment of such change the ratification of Legislatures or conventions in three-fourths of the States.[1]

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[1] See article v. of the Constitution and the comments on

In 1787 and the two following years, when the philosophy of Rousseau was reigning without a rival in France, John Adams published his 'Defence of the American Constitutions' for the purpose of showing the necessity of establishing in every form of government a balance of powers, and Alexander Hamilton, Madison, and Jay supported the same position in the 'Federalist,' which contains some of the strongest arguments in defence of those limitations of the popular power, which Rousseau so emphatically repudiated. But it can hardly be doubted that in the century which has elapsed, the steady tendency has been to discredit in theory, and to weaken in fact, all those institutions which were intended to counterbalance or to restrict the absolute authority of the majority. The tendency so largely due to Rousseau, among modern democracies, to assume like the democracies of ancient Greece an authoritative or paternal character, to attempt to mould the type of the community by regulating education and contracts, and

these provisions in the *Federalist*, Nos. xxxix. xlui. lm lxxviii. lxxxv.

As one of the best exponents of American political ideas writes: 'Each department [of government] should have its own independence secured beyond the power of being taken away by either or both of the others. . . . There should not only be constitutional means, but personal motives, to resist encroachments of one or either of the others. Thus ambition should be made to counteract ambition, the desire of power to check power, and the pressure of interest to balance an opposing interest. There seems no adequate method of producing this result but by a partial participation of each in the powers of the other, and by introducing into every operation of the Government, in all its branches, a system of checks and balances, on which the safety of free institutions has ever been found essentially to depend. Thus, for instance, a guard against rashness and violence in legislation has often been found by distributing the power among different branches, each having a negative check upon the other. A guard against the inroads of the legislative power upon the executive has been in like manner applied by giving the latter a qualified negative upon the former.'—Story *On the Constitution of the United States*, ii. 22.

interfering largely with individual action in all the relations of life, has, happily, encountered strong opposing influences, but it is at least sufficiently accentuated to cause grave apprehensions to some of the foremost thinkers of our time.

The method of reasoning in politics also, which has been increasing, appears to me to belong much more to the school of Rousseau than to that of Burke. No good observer can have failed to notice how common it has become to treat certain democratic formulæ of representative government as if they were dogmas of religion or first principles of morals, to be applied, with a total disregard for expediency or particular circumstances, to nations that are wholly dissimilar in race, character, social conditions, and political antecedents. It is not too much to say that if such principles of government become dominant in Parliament, the speedy dissolution of this great and complex Empire will be inevitable.

In purely domestic questions the influence of French modes of thought is equally apparent. Thus in all questions relating to parliamentary reform or the extension of the suffrage, a disciple of Burke, starting with a strong sense of the presumption against organic change and of the many, various, and often unforeseen evils it may produce, would ask what is the specific disease it is desired to remedy; what part of the existing Parliament is peccant or an evil; what public opinion in the country is manifestly unsatisfied or unrepresented; how far the proposed measure would remedy this specific evil; how far it would do so without producing other and greater evils? If the answers to these questions established a clear case in favour of change, he would accept the necessity, but he would strictly limit the change to the requirements of the case. It must be manifest to everyone that a wholly different order

of thought and reasoning is now in the ascendant. The dread of organic change has enormously diminished. Arguments based on arithmetical computations, and on the alleged injustice of one district or class having a greater share of political power than another, are becoming continually more popular. Inequality in representation is more and more regarded as a synonym for injustice, and this method of reasoning is carried so far that we have seen statesmen expressing their opinion that although the extension of the franchise in a particular quarter of the Empire would undoubtedly aggravate the very evil which is most conspicuous in the existing parliamentary system, it ought nevertheless to be granted because to withhold it would be to create an inequality. The old English doctrine that representation should be based not only on population but upon taxation has been discarded. Attempts to secure the competence of the representative body by maintaining a preponderance of intelligence in the electoral body, and to secure a balance and variety of representation by maintaining the diversities of the constituencies, are becoming completely obsolete. The rightful sovereignty of a mere numerical majority, in which the most ignorant and the least capable must necessarily preponderate, is becoming the first principle of English politics, and in this manner, for good or for evil, English parliamentary government is rapidly drifting from its ancient moorings. The star of Burke is manifestly fading, and a great part of the teaching of the 'Contrat Social' is passing even into English politics.

The 'Contrat Social' was published in 1762, but its great influence dates from a somewhat later period, and especially from the destruction of the Parliaments. In the reign of Lewis XVI. and in the earlier stages of the Revolution the enthusiasm for Rousseau almost amounted to adoration, and his statue was the first erected by the

National Assembly.[1] The school of the Economists, which also rose mainly in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, was in some respects a rival influence, for these writers were all intensely monarchical. Some of them, like Mercier de la Rivière, were enthusiastic advocates of despotism, and none of them had by temperament or taste the smallest tendency towards anarchy. But Quesnay, who was the leading figure in the school, though he utterly rejected Rousseau's notion of the sovereignty of the people, agreed with Rousseau in maintaining that the sovereign power must be at once single and irresistible, and that the whole system of a division and balance of power as it existed in England, and as it had been advocated by Montesquieu, was fundamentally vicious. Like Voltaire, the Economists considered what they call 'a legal despotism' the best form of government for effecting administrative reforms, and Le Trosne argued that the situation of France 'was infinitely superior' to that of England because the French Government could change the whole state of the country in a moment without being trammelled by constitutional restrictions. The Economists contended for the absolute inviolability of private property, for the establishment in lieu of all existing imposts of a single tax to be paid by every man in strict proportion to his income, for universal and obligatory education by the State, for complete liberty of industry and commerce, for a total transformation of the internal administration. Severing themselves, like Rousseau, from the historical school of politicians, they had an utter disregard for the past, and they anticipated Bentham's doctrine that the great secret of government is to be found in the harmony of public with private interest, and in the establishment

[1] See the striking picture of this enthusiasm in Burke's *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*. Burke adds a character of Rousseau which appears to me very unjust and overdrawn.

of government on a strictly utilitarian basis. No writers had before pointed out so clearly, or so powerfully, the essential evil of the whole existing system of commercial restraint, monopoly, prohibition, forced labour, fiscal mismanagement, and feudal burdens; and their doctrine that agriculture is the sole real source of national wealth, led them to bring into a special prominence the many and grievous wrongs of the country population. The rise of this school immensely increased the prevailing passion for political speculation, the desire for political experiment, the disregard for traditions and customs, the deep sense of the intolerable evils of existing laws and institutions. 'There is scarcely a young man,' wrote Grimm, in the first year of Lewis XVI., 'who on leaving college, does not form a project of establishing a new system of philosophy and of government, and scarcely a writer who does not think himself obliged to enlighten the human race about its first interests, and teach the powers of the earth the best method of governing their states.'[1]

And what was the nature of the government at the time when these ideas were seething and spreading through the nation? It was a despotism so absolute that Blackstone had a few years before classed France and Turkey together, as examples of the countries in which the personal liberty of the subject was most completely at the mercy of the Crown.[2] The system of arbitrary exile and of arbitrary imprisonment was in full force. There was nothing analogous to the English Habeas Corpus Act; no liberty of the press; no legalised religious liberty; no trial by jury; no national representation. The States-General had not met since 1614. The people had absolutely no voice in making

[1] Grimm et Diderot, *Corresp. Lit.* August 1774.
[2] Blackstone, iv. c. 27, § 5.

the laws they obeyed, and, except in a very few provinces, with the destruction of the Parliaments the last semblance of control on the taxing powers of the Crown had been lost.

It is of course true that in France, as in all other despotisms, there were some unwritten, or even fully recognised, obstacles to the omnipotence of the Sovereign. Long-continued usage and precedent established lines of government which could not be safely abandoned. There were classes and interests and currents of opinion too powerful to be altogether disregarded, and the sale of hereditary offices had given a great number of officials in all departments vested interests and a large measure of practical independence. Montesquieu defended this venality of offices as a means of establishing permanent orders in the State, and as distinguishing monarchy from pure despotism, under which all subjects may at any moment be placed or displaced by the will of the Sovereign.[1] The clergy retained a considerable power of self-government, and large classes of offices were reserved by law to the nobles. But the rightful power of the Sovereign as recognised by the heads of the French Church, and of the French law, and as asserted by a long succession of French kings, was almost without a limit. He claimed to be the sole representative of the nation, the sole source of legislative as of all other political power. 'All the property of his subjects belongs to him, and in taking it he is only taking what is his own.'[2] Under a strong sovereign like Lewis XIV. this unrestrained

[1] *Esprit des Lois*, liv. v. c. 19. Voltaire has strongly censured this passage, which he attributed to the fact that Montesquieu himself held a magisterial office which had been purchased by his uncle.

[2] This was formally asserted in a Consultation of the Sorbonne under Lewis XIV. See much evidence on this subject in Garet, *Les Bienfaits de la Révolution*, pp. 3–6.

power was concentrated in the King. Under weak sovereigns like Lewis XV. and Lewis XVI. it passed chiefly into the hands of the King's ministers; of the King's Council, a body appointed by the Crown and revocable at pleasure; of the intendants and their delegates who carried on the government of the provinces.

France had at one time possessed a very large amount of local and provincial self-government, but the institutions around which it centred had been one by one either annihilated or reduced to impotence. Each province had formerly been under the direction of a governor who was a great local nobleman appointed for life, and occupying a position somewhat similar to that of an English lord lieutenant. But it had been the policy of Richelieu to take the government of the country from the aristocracy, and he did this very effectually by placing all real power in the hands of a new class of functionaries called intendants, who were removable at pleasure, unconnected for the most part with the provinces they ruled, and frequently changed from one to the other. Lewis XIV. gave them almost unlimited powers, including that of life and death. It was for them and for their delegates to adjust the burden of taxation, to regulate all matters relating to the militia, the roads, the internal commerce, the public works, the administration of justice; and their power was so absolute that Law scarcely exaggerated when he said 'that the kingdom of France was in reality governed by thirty intendants.' Appeals to the Crown against abuses in the provinces were only illusory, for they were systematically referred to the intendants themselves.[1]

In the Middle Ages each province had possessed the very important institution known as the Provincial

[1] See a remarkable memoir of Necker in favour of the creation of provincial assemblies. *Garet*, pp. 108-110.

States. With some diversity of form, these States consisted of the three orders of nobles, clergy, and commons, and they had the right of voting and distributing the local, and even a part of the general taxation, and of directing the whole administration of the provinces. But chiefly under the influence of Richelieu, these provincial States had been totally abolished over three-fourths of France. For a time the provinces that were deprived of them retained the power of electing some functionaries, and they were therefore called 'pays d'élection,' but this too was soon abolished. Three-fourths of France was now divested of all local self-government and lay at the mercy of intendants appointed by the Crown, and of delegates appointed by the intendants. Of the eight provinces called the 'pays d'état,' which comprised the remaining fourth, and still possessed provincial States, Languedoc and Bretagne alone retained some real vestiges of their old independence. The overwhelming powers conferred on the intendants; the severe restrictions imposed on the proceedings of the provincial States, and the influence the Government easily acquired over a large proportion of their members, were sufficient to reduce those bodies to complete subservience.[1] In the towns the right of electing municipal functionaries had been abolished in 1692; municipal independence had received its death-blow when Lewis XIV. for the purpose of raising money began the system of putting up municipal offices for sale, and almost all real power in the towns was gradually absorbed by the central government and exercised through intendants.[2]

[1] On the Provincial Government of France, see Lavergne, *Les Assemblées Provinciales sous Louis XVI.* c. i.; Tocqueville, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 313–327; Garet, *Les Bienfaits de la Révolution*, pp. 106–120; and an admirable chapter in Loménie, *Les Mirabeau*, ii. 103–132.

[2] See the very full examination of the state of Municipal Government in Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime*, pp. 63–76.

The judicial tribunals were equally dependent. The King, by the intervention of the Grand Council claimed the power of revising and altering their decisions in the interests of the State and without any regard to the letter of the law. Intendants with the assistance of councillors chosen by themselves could withdraw trials from the regular tribunals, and condemn men to the galleys or even to death, and if a functionary had broken the law the power of the Crown was almost invariably exerted to withdraw him from the jurisdiction of the law courts.[1]

With the centralisation of government the division of classes steadily increased. In England the mixture of classes, and the presence in the country districts of a great number of families of the gentleman class, may be largely ascribed to three very dissimilar influences, the unpaid magistracy, field sports, and an established Church. The gratuitous administration of county government provides the country gentleman with an important sphere of duties and dignities; the national passion for field sports forms a sufficient counterpoise to the pleasures of the town; the established Church scatters over the country districts, and concentrates in the small cathedral towns, a multitude of families who represent in the most graceful, useful, and intelligent form the life of the less opulent country gentleman. But in France the conditions were wholly different. A celibate priesthood drawn chiefly from the humbler classes has never had this social influence. The passion for field sports has always been less strong and less diffused than in England, though the game laws were in some respects much more oppressive.[2] The French

[1] Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime*, pp. 77-83.

[2] A striking account of the iniquities of French game laws will be found in Arthur Young. Pinkerton, iv. 417, 418. There were districts called 'capitaneries' extending over 400 leagues of coun-

country gentlemen had themselves no magisterial powers or duties, though they possessed, and often grossly abused, a right of appointing petty judges to try petty cases in their several districts.[1]

With increasing centralisation and the excessive multiplication of Government employments, their sphere of influence had grown very narrow, and Arthur Young noticed that gratuitous public service, which was so common in England, was utterly foreign to French ideas.[2] It had been one of the objects of the French kings, and especially of Lewis XIV., to draw all the leading members of the class to Paris, and to attach them to the Court; and before the Revolution broke out, great districts had been completely denuded of country gentry. Scarcely any but the poorer nobles lived in the country, and if members of the richer class were found there, it was almost exclusively in order to economise.[3] Voltaire explained the general failure of French poets to describe rural scenes by the great disfavour with which country life was regarded by the educated classes in France.[4] And besides this, the crushing taxation which fell upon land that was not privileged, and the heavy and degrading duty called the franc fief which was exacted from every member of the middle class who purchased privileged or seigneurial lands, drove those who had made fortunes

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try, which were granted for sporting purposes to princes of the blood, in which game was not only preserved to the most extravagant extent, but many of the most ordinary processes of agriculture were prohibited lest they should interfere with it.

[1] A very full history of the 'Justices Seigneuriales' will be found in Loménie, *Les Mirabeau*, ii. 63–87. Beaumarchais has given an amusing picture of these courts in the *Mariage de Figaro*.

[2] Young's *Travels in France*. Pinkerton, iv. 160.

[3] The influence of these circumstances on the position of the nobles is excellently traced by Necker in his work on the Revolution, *Œuvres*, ix. 118–121.

[4] *Discours de réception dans l'Académie. Œuvres de Voltaire*, xlii. 6, 7.

in industrial life from the land market unless they had previously purchased titles of nobility.[1]

Among the peasants, however, the desire for land was very strong. Their savings were generally invested in it. Land naturally sold best in small quantities, and the landlords were in general very willing to sell. Many of them had ceased to take any interest in their estates, and had been ruined by the extravagance of Paris and of the Court, and many others were glad to get rid of large tracts of unproductive land which peasants were ready to purchase and cultivate, or had found profitable openings for their capital in the purchase of Government employments and in the rapidly expanding sphere of industrial life. If the peasants were unable to raise the whole of the purchase money, it was usually commuted into a perpetual fixed rent. Under these various influences possibly a fourth part, certainly not less than a fifth part, of the soil of France had passed before the Revolution into the possession of peasant proprietors.[2]

In this fact there was laid the foundation of a great

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[1] *Œuvres de Necker*, ix. 90, 91.

[2] Compare Tocqueville, pp. 55–58; Chérest, *La Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, ii. 532–539; Taine, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 453–455. Arthur Young conjectured in 1789 that a third part of the land was in the hands of peasant proprietors. This is said to be (exclusive of communal property) about the present proportion; but Arthur Young almost certainly exaggerated. Taine quotes an estimate of 1760, which gives a fourth part of the soil to peasant proprietors, but M. L. de Lavergne, who is probably the best authority on the agricultural history of France, says: 'On peut se faire une idée assez exacte de l'état de la propriété avant 1789, en divisant le sol national en cinq portions à peu près égales, une possédée par la couronne et les communes, une par le clergé, une par la noblesse, une par le tiers état et une par le peuple des campagnes.'—Lavergne, *Les Assemblées Provinciales sous Louis XVI.* p. 19. See, too, on the growth of peasant proprietors between 1760 and 1789 the valuable book of M. Gasquet, *Les Institutions Politiques et Sociales de l'Ancienne France*, ii. 330–336.

part of the future conservatism of France, but its immediate effects were as far as possible from conservative. The small proprietor, who had usually purchased with money borrowed on hard terms, soon found himself struggling with difficulty and want, and exposed to various exactions from which as a tenant he had been exempt. The tithes were less severe than in England,[1] but falling on a much poorer population they were bitterly resented, and they strengthened the anti-ecclesiastical spirit in the country districts, while hatred of the many feudal privileges of the nobles became one of the strongest feelings of the French mind. These privileges were of many kinds, and they had many different origins. One class were essentially of the nature of property—rights or dues or tributes which had been reserved when the land was conceded to the peasant, and which were the conditions, and, in part at least, the price of the purchase. Another large class were derived from the period when the nobles discharged many of the duties of sovereignty, and conducted in person the administration of the provinces, and they continued to be exacted when the services for which they had originally been imposed were no longer rendered; while others again were relics of ancient serfdom. There were fixed annual payments of the nature of ground rents. There were tributes in kind, of wine and corn and chickens. There were duties to a feudal lord when a farm changed hands; duties or tolls on markets, fairs, auctions, bridges, ferries, high roads, weights and measures. There were rights to the property of those who were condemned to death; to the

[1] See Arthur Young. Pinkerton, iv. 419, 449. There was the same distinction as in Ireland, between the old tithes, which were universally recognised, and the tithes of doubtful legality imposed on agricultural products more recently introduced. Chérest, *La Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, i. 45.

property of those who died without an heir; to the property of foreigners who died on the domain of the lord. There were exclusive rights of hunting, shooting, keeping pigeons and rabbit warrens, and there were many quaint, antiquated, and sometimes degrading rights of homage of a purely honorary description. The monopoly which the feudal lord possessed of the right of building mills, baking-ovens, and winepresses, and the obligation imposed on the peasant of giving annually a certain number of days' labour gratuitously to his feudal lord, were among the most oppressive portions of the system. In some provinces the lord had the right of selling his wine for thirty or forty days before that of the peasant could be brought into the market.

The feudal burdens varied greatly in their amount; and in some districts, especially Languedoc, Dauphiné, and the Lyonnais, much land was 'allodial' or exempt.[1] But over by far the greater part of France the feudal system was in full force. It was less severe than in Germany and some other countries, where serfdom was still general, and it had been slightly alleviated in the course of the century. The number of the days of forced labour had been by custom reduced; many ancient tolls had been abolished, and it was the spirit of the law courts to construe strictly the right to feudal services, and to recognise only those which were distinctly authorised by title deeds, and which were therefore usually due to an ancient contract. But when all this is admitted, it remains true that the small proprietor as well as the peasant found himself involved in a perfect maze of intricate, vexatious, oppressive, and often ruinous obligations for which he seemed to receive no corresponding advantage. While some parts of the system were plainly unjust, being payments for services

[1] See Loménie, *Les Mirabeau*, ii. 20–26.

that were no longer rendered, other dues were strictly of the nature of property, being elements of a regular sale. Even the most legitimate, however, were now resented, and the resentment became the stronger because those to whom they were paid lived chiefly in the towns and had lost the power and the popularity both of landlords and administrators. With frequent sales of land the feudal rights had constantly changed hands. They often passed into the hands of men who had no other connection with the soil. A great part were in the possession of the Church. Another, and perhaps still larger, part had been acquired by the middle classes.[1] The incessant subdivision of small farms had at the same time broken many feudal dues into minute fractions, greatly increased the cost of their collection, and given rise to a vast amount of complication and obscurity, and as a consequence to much expensive and irritating litigation.[2]

D'Argenson as early as 1751 had very wisely recommended their compulsory purchase, and such a measure was actually carried out with great success in Piedmont twenty years later by Charles Emmanuel III. In France, however, these rights were preserved with little change till the Revolution, and they gave that movement some of its worst and most distinctive characteristics. Famine, avarice, and revolutionary incitements conspired in producing a great revolt against feudal rights. All classes were thrown into the same

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[1] Doniol, *La Révolution Française et la Féodalité*, p. 39.

[2] There is a large literature on the subject of feudal rights. I have chiefly made use of the works of Doniol, Tocqueville, Taine, Chérest, Loménie and Garet, Arthur Young's *Tour*, and Janet's *Origines du Socialisme contemporain*. See, too, an excellent lecture by Sir H. Maine in his *Early Law and Custom*. The chief earlier authorities on the subject are Boncerf, *Les Inconvénients des Droits féodaux*, and the report presented to the Constituent Assembly by Rétif de Merlin of Douay.

category, and it became the main object of the peasantry to annihilate all without compensation. Hence the atrocious Jacquerie which formed one of the most hideous scenes of the first act of the Revolution; the burning of castles in order to destroy the muniment rooms and the title deeds they contained; the frequent murder of the feudal lords. The Constituent Assembly attempted to abolish feudal obligations by a discriminating and statesmanlike measure purchasing that portion of them which was clearly of the nature of property, but it was unable to induce the excited peasantry to accept the decree, and at last in 1793 the Convention crowned the work of revolution by sweeping away without compensation the whole feudal system, including many money dues which had been purchased, and as it was believed secured, by the most legitimate contracts.

While the feudal system turned the peasantry against the nobles, other causes not less powerful were arraying them against the Government. If there had been at this time a really strong, intelligent, and reforming despotism, it would have certainly represented a large portion of public opinion. Such a Government, provided it is not under clerical influence, has always been popular in France, and it would have found a wide sphere for its exertions. It might have employed the strength of the Executive in placing the taxation of the country on a broad and equitable basis; sweeping away a crowd of invidious class privileges, obsolete and barbarous laws, commercial and industrial restraints; giving a very ignorant population some measure of technical and agricultural education, and stimulating by the many means in its power material prosperity. If it had made France respected abroad and prosperous at home, if it had given her a sound and equal administrative system as well as religious and intellectual liberty, it would have fulfilled the desire both of Voltaire and

the Economists, and it would have found so much public support that it might probably have defied all the efforts of the revolutionary school of Rousseau.

A Government of this kind, however, is easily conceived but rarely realised, and the despotism of France was weak and imbecile, and corroded with unrighteous privilege. The taxation of the country had grown to a colossal height through the wars of Lewis XIV., and subsequent mismanagement had greatly aggravated the burden. There are few subjects of inquiry more difficult than a comparison of the financial condition of France before and after the Revolution. The great change in the value of money throughout Europe; the special increase in the national wealth of France; the complete alteration of the whole system of taxation; the extreme complexity, obscurity, and confusion in which the finances of ancient France were involved; the habit of deferring accounts till several years after they had become due, and the frequent false representations which were given upon authority, create many pitfalls for the historian. Much research has, however, been devoted to the subject, and in the opinion of one of the best judges, the annual imposts borne by the French people at the outbreak of the Revolution, including the tithes and local dues and taxes, may be estimated at eight hundred and eighty millions of livres, while the whole wealth of the country was less than one-third of what it became eighty years later. According to this estimate the taxation of France in 1789 bore a higher proportion to its wealth than under any of the Governments up to the fall of Napoleon III., with the single exception of the Reign of Terror.[1]

Under any circumstances such taxation would have been burdensome, but it was rendered intolerable by its

[1] Sybel, *Hist. de la Révolution*, i. 34, 38, 39.

enormous, its scandalous injustice. The whole noble class and the whole body of the clergy were exempted from the greater part of it. From the 'taille' or personal tax, which was the heaviest tax in France, and which had increased tenfold in two centuries, they were in nearly all cases absolutely free; and although they did pay the capitation tax and the tax called the 'vingtième,' they paid it on a separate and a lower scale. The number of the so-called 'privileged' individuals is said to have been not less than 270,000, and it was continually increasing by the sale of offices which carried with them the privilege of nobility. Necker mentioned that in his time there were no less than 4,000 of these offices. Yet even this does not by any means measure the whole amount of the exemptions. There were many thousands of petty offices which did not confer the rights of nobility, but which freed those who held them from the 'taille' and reduced some of their other taxes to small dimensions.[1] There were whole towns which had secured for themselves considerable exemptions,[2] and nearly all over France the full weight of the taxation fell mainly upon the small peasantry, upon the classes of the community who were the most poor and the most helpless. At a time when the passion for equality was at its height this astounding inequality of the poor, crushed by taxation in order that the rich might be relieved, was continually before the eyes of the people. There was probably not a parish, not a village, in the country districts in which it was not illustrated by examples. An historian who has examined with great care the details of French taxation has estimated that over a great part of France the class which was 'taillable,' and which consisted chiefly of the farmers of the

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[1] Taine, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 474-481; Tocqueville, pp. 138, 139.

[2] See the examples in Taine, pp. 478, 479.

country, paid on an average out of every 100 francs of their nett revenue no less than 53 francs in direct taxation, 14 francs 28 centimes in tithes, and 14 francs 28 centimes in feudal dues, leaving less than a fifth part for the support of themselves and their families.[1]

It has been estimated by the same historian that the proportion of taxation to revenue, borne in several provinces by those who were 'taillable,' was about five times as great as at present,[2] and its enormity was mainly due to the exemptions enjoyed by almost all the wealthier members of the community. For the poor there were no such exemptions. The capitation tax, especially, pursued the humblest and the most helpless. The workman who gained but fivepence a day for his labour sometimes paid eight, nine, or ten livres of capitation, and the tax was paid even by those wretched beings who hovered round the gutters of the great towns in search of rags or broken bottles, or pieces of iron, or who sold old hats and clothes through the streets.[3]

The system of taxation was as arbitrary as it was unjust. The King's Council decided the amount which each province should pay, and had even the right of increasing the 'taille' by a simple 'arrêt,' until Necker in 1780 induced the King to consent that this should in future only be done by a regular law registered by Parliament.[4] In the 'pays d'élection' the intendants and their subordinates exercised an almost absolute power in assigning to each district and individual their proportion of the burden. Enormous abuses naturally grew up; despotic power was encountered by concealment and falsehood, but on the whole those who pos-

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[1] Taine, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 458-461, 542, 543.

[2] Ibid. p. 461.

[3] Ibid. pp. 461-463. Full details about these anomalies will be found in the great works of Taine and Tocqueville.

[4] Lavergne, *Assemblées Provinciales*, p. 61.

sessed wealth and influence were usually favoured. Many branches of the revenue were farmed out, and the 'fermiers' were not less extortionate and oppressive than the Irish tithe proctors, to whom they bore a marked resemblance.

The exemption of the nobles from taxation originated at a time when they were a small body, and its justification was the gratuitous military service they were then bound to render. But after the institution of standing armies this reason no longer existed, while the amount of the taxes was vastly increased. Montesquieu described the gigantic armies of his day as 'a new malady,' which had spread over Europe, and which was threatening its chief countries with absolute ruin.[1] It was impossible that the whole burden of supporting them should rest permanently on the poor, and some feeble efforts were accordingly made to diffuse it. The taxation of the privileged classes began after the Peace of Ryswick with the capitation tax and the 'tenths,' and from this time French finance ministers steadily endeavoured to mitigate the inequality.[2] It gradually became a settled maxim among them that every increase of taxation should be met by augmenting the 'twentieth,' which applied to the property of all classes, rather than the 'taille,' from which the privileged classes were exempt, and a serious effort was

[1] *Esprit des Lois*, xiii. c. 17.

[2] Turgot, recommending the abolition of corvées for the repair of the roads and the substitution for them of a tax paid by all classes, says: 'Il faut suivre . . . la marche que tous les ministres des finances ont constamment suivie depuis quatre-vingts ans, et davantage; car il n'y en a pas un qui n'ait constamment cherché à restreindre en général tous les privilèges, sans en excepter ceux de la noblesse et du clergé.'—Turgot, *Réponses aux Objections du Garde des Sceaux*. *Œuvres* (ed. 1809), viii. 226, 227. This work contains a great deal of valuable information about the inequalities of taxation in France. See, too, Loménie, *Les Mirabeau*, ii. 93–99.

made to amend the shamefully low valuation upon which the privileged classes paid the former tax. Something was done in this direction, though slowly and imperfectly, but the further prosecution of the scheme appears to have been abandoned in 1782 through the opposition of the Parliaments.[1] In the meantime the inequality of taxation was becoming continually more intolerable through the double process of an increasing aggregate burden and of an increasing number of exemptions. The character, numbers, and position of the French aristocracy had wholly changed, since Richelieu and Lewis XIV. had drawn the more important and opulent members from the management of their estates to the dissipations of Paris, and since Mazarin had begun the system of annexing hereditary titles to the magistracy, and to a crowd of other offices purchased from the King.[2] It had become so easy to buy nobility with money that Turgot scarcely exaggerated when he wrote that 'the class of the nobles comprised the whole class of the rich,'[3] and it was this class which was refusing to bear its reasonable proportion of the burdens of the State.

The injustice was glaring and intolerable, but it was not peculiar to France. It may be found during the eighteenth century in almost every leading country on

[1] See the history of this transaction in Chérest, *La Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, i. 38–40.

[2] Necker, *Œuvres*, ix. 122, 123. Necker says: 'Près de la moitié de l'ordre de la noblesse tel qu'il existait à l'approche des derniers états généraux était composé de familles ennoblies depuis deux siècles par les charges de conseillers aux parlemens, de conseillers à la cour des aides, d'auditeurs, de correcteurs et de maîtres des comptes, de conseillers du Châtelet, de maîtres des requêtes, de trésoriers de France, de secrétaires du roi du grand et du petit collège, et par d'autres charges encore; comme aussi par des places de capitouls, d'échevins, et par des brevets émanés de la faveur des rois, des ministres et des premiers commis. On doit ajouter encore à tous ces jets de noblesse moderne les droits acquis par une certaine suite de services militaires combinés avec la nature des grades.'

[3] *Œuvres de Turgot*, viii. 234.

the Continent,[1] and it is one of the points in which the contrast between English and continental Governments is most remarkable. The predominating influence of a landed aristocracy in England may indeed be plainly seen in laws which artificially foster the agglomeration of land. It may be seen in the severity of the game laws. It has been seen by some writers in the continued lowness of the land tax, but such writers forget the number and magnitude of the special burdens on land, and the immense change which has taken place in the relative importance of real and personal property since the Revolution, and they forget also the remarkable fact that the so-called land-tax was originally imposed, not solely on land, but also on personal property, and that it is personal property and not land which has since been exempted.[2] Land was, however, exempted from the succession duties which Pitt's Acts of 1789 and 1796 imposed on personal property, and the law of distress gives landlords a preferential claim as creditors in the case of the insolvency of their tenants. But in general the richer classes in England have never claimed any exemption from taxation, while they have readily accepted many special burdens, and when they secured for themselves a virtual monopoly of places of dignity and power their usual method was to make those offices either absolutely gratuitous or exceedingly underpaid. As Tocqueville has truly said: 'For centuries the only inequalities of taxation in England were those which had been successively introduced in favour of the necessitous classes. . . . In the eighteenth century it was the poor who enjoyed exemptions from taxation in England, in France it was the rich. In the one case the aristocracy had taken upon its own shoulders the

[1] Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, pp. 95-99.

[2] 4 William and Mary, cap. 1. See Mr. Brodrick's *English Land and Landowners*, p. 246; M'Culloch on *Taxation*, p. 62. The assessment on personal property was abandoned in 1833.

heaviest public charges in order to be allowed to govern. In the other case it retained to the end an immunity from taxation, in order to console itself for the loss of government.'[1] It is true that the position of the English working classes in relation to taxation was not quite so favourable in the eighteenth century as at present, when almost all articles of first necessity and all the raw materials of industry are untaxed, but still they had no special burdens, and they had many special exemptions. Arthur Young relates the enthusiasm and the astonishment with which a French mob during the Revolution received a short speech which he made them, on the difference between taxation in England and France. 'We have many taxes,' said the English traveller, 'in England which you know nothing of in France, but the tiers état, the poor, do not pay them. They are laid on the rich. Every window in a man's house pays, but if he has no more than six windows he pays nothing. A seigneur with a great estate pays the vingtièmes and tailles, but the little proprietor of a garden pays nothing. The rich pay for their horses, their carriages, their servants, and even for liberty to kill their own partridges; but the poor farmer pays nothing of all this, and what is more we have in England a tax paid by the rich for the relief of the poor.'[2]

To complete the picture of the evils of French administration, we have to remember the enormous multiplication of pensions, sinecures, and absurdly overpaid offices reserved exclusively for the privileged classes, and the enormous multiplication of judicial and other offices habitually put up for sale. The sale of offices extended to the army, the navy, the ordnance, and even the ecclesiastical employments about the household.[3]

[1] *L'Ancien Régime*, pp. 146, 147.

[2] Pinkerton, iv. 200.

[3] See an essay by St. Pierre on 'Manners in France,' *Ann. Reg.* 1762, p. 154.

The burden of the militia fell wholly on the peasantry, and as married men were exempted, it was one cause of the commonness of improvident marriages among them, which contrasts so remarkably with the rareness of such marriages in our day.[1] Unpaid labour was exacted twice a year for making and repairing the roads. The sale of salt was a strict monopoly of the Government, and its price, making full allowance for the alteration in the value of money, was eight times as high as in the present day.[2] Bread was made artificially dear by the restrictions on the internal commerce of corn; similar restrictions were imposed on the internal commerce of wine and brandy, and the system of jurandes placed every trade on the basis of monopoly, and forbade the workmen to migrate in search of more profitable markets for their industry. Endless tolls and restrictions and ancient privileges interlaced and impeded industry at every turn, and between ignorance and poverty and oppression, agriculture, over a great part of France, was little more advanced than in the Middle Ages. Arthur Young calculated that an acre of land produced in England on an average from twenty-four to twenty-five bushels of grain, but in France only eighteen, and that while the produce of arable land in the one country might be estimated at 50*s.*, in the other it was only 35*s.*[3]

In this manner France, in spite of its extraordinary advantages in soil and climate, its admirable geographical position, and the great energy and skill of its manufacturers, continued to be a poor country, and while its towns ranked among the most brilliant in Europe, every bad season reduced a great part of its

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[1] Pinkerton, iv. 416.

[2] Taine, p. 468.

[3] Arthur Young's *Tour* (original edition of 1792), i. 341, 462. Very full examinations of the condition of the French peasantry will be found in the works of Lavergne and of Babeau, and in the first chapter of Sybel's *Hist. de la Révolution.*

country population to absolute famine. Vauban and St. Simon have drawn in imperishable lines the picture of their misery under Lewis XIV., and the constant and formidable bread riots during the whole of the eighteenth century show how persistently that misery continued. In 1739 and 1740 the distress was such that D'Argenson expressed his belief that in those years more Frenchmen died of misery than in all the wars of Lewis XIV.[1] In 1750 and 1751 the same scenes were reproduced. Whole villages were deserted. At least 20,000 workmen fled across the frontier. In some districts field labour could hardly be accomplished, for the few remaining peasants were so extenuated by hunger that they could scarcely hold the spade or direct the plough, and gaunt, famine-stricken crowds, shouting for bread, besieged the town halls and followed the Dauphin as he drove to Notre Dame.[2] In one month in 1753, and in one quarter of Paris, no less than 800 persons died of misery.[3] 1770 and 1773 were both years of famine,[4] and although the commercial wealth of France increased rapidly during the early years of Lewis XVI. it left the condition of the peasantry little changed.

The provinces, it is true, differed greatly in taxation, feudal burdens, soil, cultivation, and general well-being. Turgot described Normandy, Flanders, Picardy, and the districts around Paris and Orleans as flourishing, but he added that at least four-sevenths of France was cultivated by tenants who were absolute paupers, who held their land for the most part by the metayer tenure, and who were very generally reduced to the most abject misery through the burden of the 'taille' and the oppression of

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[1] *Mémoires*, iii. 92. See several particulars of this famine in Rocquain, pp. 103–105, and in Taine, pp. 431–433.

[2] Rocquain, pp. 144, 145; Taine, pp. 433–436.

[3] Rocquain, p. 168.

[4] Ibid. pp. 274, 306.

the middleman.[1] The detailed investigation of Arthur Young, about twenty years later, amply corroborates the picture. While he found a few provinces fairly prosperous, he estimated that there were in France 'not less than 40,000,000 acres that were absolutely or nearly waste, that country labour was paid seventy-six per cent. less than in England, that the metayers who formed the great mass of the French tenantry were sunk in a poverty to which there was no parallel in England, and which was certainly not exceeded in Ireland, and that their extreme poverty was mainly to be ascribed to the arbitrary and excessive 'taille,' and to the manifold oppressions of the feudal system. 'What a miracle,' he wrote, 'that all this splendour and wealth of the cities of France should be so unconnected with the country. There are no gentle transitions from ease to comfort, from comfort to wealth. You pass at once from beggary to profusion, from misery in mud cabins to . . . spectacles at 500 livres a night; the country deserted, or if a gentleman in it, you find him in some wretched hole to save that money which is lavished with profusion in the luxuries of a capital.'[2] As in the Roman Empire in the period of its decadence, great districts fell wholly out of cultivation, on account of the overwhelming weight of the burdens on agriculture.

I have now enumerated the chief intellectual, social, political, and moral influences that prepared the great catastrophe of the Revolution. The enumeration, however imperfect, will throw some light on the contrasts between the conditions of England and France; the alleged danger of French principles spreading to

[1] *Mémoires sur les Impositions dans la Généralité de Limoges* (1766); *Œuvres de Turgot*, tom. iv.

[2] Pinkerton, iv. 158. See, too, Taine, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 429–455.

England, and the causes which made the Revolution in France much more than a merely national or merely political event. It is unnecessary, however, for my present purpose, to examine with the same detail the fifteen memorable years between the accession of Lewis XVI. and the final catastrophe; when, under a virtuous and most well-meaning, but feeble, sluggish, and vacillating King, the experiment of reform was tried and failed. Contrary to the wishes of Voltaire, but amid great popular rejoicing, the Parliaments and other law courts which had been abolished under Lewis XV. were restored, and in the person of Turgot the best and greatest of the Economists assumed the reins of power. Thoroughly imbued with the most enlightened economical teaching of his time, thoroughly acquainted, through his thirteen years' experience as intendant of Limousin, with the conditions, wants, and misery of the French people, this great minister attempted reforms which would have remedied, or at least alleviated, nearly all the more important abuses that have been described. He was supported warmly, and on the whole loyally, by the King, and in Malesherbes he found a colleague who was as pure-minded and conscientious as himself.

The Ministry of Turgot lasted little more than twenty months,[1] and during a considerable part of it he was confined to his room by the gout, but it formed one of the most memorable pages in the century. No minister ever showed a more untiring energy, a more single-minded desire for public good, a more thorough knowledge, both of existing abuses and of the remedies by which they might be cured; but he was wholly wanting in the art of managing and conciliating men,

[1] This was as Controller-General. He had been, for about a month before, Minister for the Navy.

and in the art of measuring his reforms by the state of public opinion. Austere, absolute, and rigid in his character and in his manners, he was too much governed by general maxims and by considerations of abstract utility, and his conviction of the precariousness of his power, and of the probable shortness of his life, gave a feverish energy to his policy, and led him to attempt far more than he could possibly have accomplished. The enumeration of the reforms which he effected, attempted, or proposed makes one of the most wonderful pictures of political activity in history. They comprised the suppression of the corvées and of the jurandes, a complete readjustment of the taxation of France, the establishment of a most elaborate system of local self-government in the form of assemblies which were to be elected in every province, the removal of all, or nearly all, the barriers on internal commerce, a commutation of the feudal dues, the reorganisation of the courts of justice, the concession of full religious liberty to the Protestants, a general system of national secular education. Something was accomplished, but the most important designs were defeated, and all the classes whose interests and privileges were menaced soon conspired against him. The reconstituted Parliaments, fully verifying the prediction of Voltaire, and forgetting their old quarrels with the clergy, made themselves the most formidable defenders of the old privileges. The Parliament of Paris burnt the work in which Boncerf, at the instigation of Turgot, pointed out the evils of the feudal system; and it protested vehemently against the abolition of the corvées and jurandes, and against the equalisation of the taxes. The clergy rose in indignation against the proposed measures of toleration, and they looked with horror on a minister who was in open sympathy with the philosophers. The merchants were enraged at the abolition of the jurandes, and countless

particular interests were alarmed and irritated by the measures of equalisation and economy. Courtiers and magistrates, the clergy and the merchants, were soon leagued against the minister; and although Voltaire defended him with admirable force, he could not turn the stream. Even among the poor, whom he so deeply loved, Turgot was not wholly popular. One of his best measures was the removal of the restraints upon the internal commerce of corn; but a bad year happened to follow, and in the fierce bread riots that ensued, the cry was raised that Turgot was starving the people.

Though one of the greatest of reformers, he had no wish to strengthen the popular element in the French Government. He entirely rejected the advice of Malesherbes, who desired the convocation of the States-General. The work of Boncerf, which he inspired, maintained that it was in the power of the Sovereign by his royal authority to abolish the feudal system. The bread riots were suppressed under Turgot quite as energetically and quite as severely as under former administrations, and his attitude towards the Parliaments was one of uncompromising hostility. He had never approved of their revival; he saw plainly that their doctrine that no tax was obligatory which they had not freely registered, was the most formidable obstacle to his design of putting an end to the exemptions of the privileged orders from taxation; and his two greatest measures—the abolition of the corvées and the abolition of the jurandes—were forced through a hostile and protesting Parliament by beds of justice, and with the strongest possible assertion of the omnipotence of the royal power. The whole legislative power of the nation, he emphatically declared, was rightly concentrated in the Sovereign; and although he desired to confer upon local bodies large powers of administration and of advice, he was inflexibly opposed to any restriction or

partition of the authority of the King.[1] But the party at Court which was opposed to him, and the party of the privileged orders, daily increased; and the Queen, who disliked his manners and still more his economies, used her influence in favour of the opposition. The King wished to support him, but he had little confidence in his own judgment, and found that nearly all with whom he came in contact were hostile to the minister. He was himself disturbed by Turgot's religious views, disappointed at the number of animosities that he aroused, alarmed at the effect of his policy in producing riots of peasants against their feudal lords, and of workmen against their masters. Maurepas, who from the beginning of the reign had a great influence over the King's judgment, was hostile to Turgot. The Queen, indignant at Turgot's removing one of her favourites, gave the last blow. Malesherbes had already resigned in disgust; and in May 1776 Turgot was dismissed and disgraced. 'I shall never,' wrote Voltaire, 'console myself for having seen rise and perish the golden age, which these two ministers were preparing for us.'

The dismissal of Turgot was speedily followed by the restoration of the corvées and jurandes, amid many manifestations of popular indignation. The influence of Maurepas on the mind of the King was strengthened,

[1] See Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, pp. 206, 212. It is characteristic of Turgot's love of strong government that he altogether objected to the provisions in the Constitution of the United States for restricting, qualifying, and balancing the democratic element. Having adopted the principle of democracy, he maintained that the Americans should have collected all authority into one centre, instead of dividing it between a president and two Houses of Congress with defined and limited powers. It was these criticisms which chiefly produced John Adams' remarkable *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States*.

but the vision of innumerable great reforms unexpectedly presented, and then suddenly withdrawn, stimulated the restless and innovating spirit which had been steadily growing in France, while among the privileged classes a feeling of insecurity began to spread. Madame de Staël happily described or defined the philosophical spirit of the time as a growing habit of measuring all things by reason and not by habit, and institutions which had long been acquiesced in without a murmur were now submitted to a jealous scrutiny.

After a short interval, however, the policy of reform was resumed, though within narrower limits, by Necker, whose first financial ministry extended from October 1776 to May 1781. The Genevese banker was beyond all things a financier, and he viewed the whole question mainly in its financial aspect. The confidence he inspired among the moneyed classes was remarkably shown by the great success of his war loans; he introduced many skilful economies into many different branches of public service; he endeavoured with praiseworthy courage to check the enormous and criminal extravagance of Marie Antoinette, and he took the bold and, in truth, somewhat doubtful step of making the nation aware of the magnitude of the financial crisis by publishing for the first time a full account of the revenue and expenditure. He abstained from the ambitious and systematic measures of Turgot, but a reform of the hospitals, the establishment of monts de piété for the benefit of the struggling poor, the abolition of servitude on the royal domains, a royal proclamation inviting the feudal lords to follow the royal example, and the abolition of torture inflicted previous to trial, mark the spirit of his administration. He was deeply sensible of the enormous injustice inflicted on the provinces by the absolute power of the intendants to determine the amount of the taille, and he also saw

clearly that the financial equilibrium could never be restored unless the existing exemptions from taxation were abolished. But such a measure could not be carried by simple royal authority, in the face of the opposition of the aristocratic Parliaments, which had been violently suppressed, and then unwisely restored.

His plan was, in part at least, substantially the same as that which had been recommended by Fénelon to the Duke of Burgundy. Fénelon had proposed the revival in each province of the Provincial States consisting of the three orders, and he desired to entrust to them, and ultimately to the States-General, which they were to elect, the reform of the system of taxation. With a foresight, however, which subsequent events signally justified, he perceived that the usual form of the old Provincial States, in which the three orders voted separately, gave the privileged orders a preponderance which would be fatal to the scheme. In the States of Languedoc alone, the three orders voted together, and the representatives of the third order equalled those of the other orders combined. This model Fénelon proposed for imitation, and he recommended at the same time the abolition of the intendants.

The death of the Duke of Burgundy destroyed the prospects of a scheme which, if it had been adopted in time, might have introduced into French administration a most efficient and active principle of freedom and of reform. Several writers recurred to the proposal, but Turgot sought to attain the objects of Fénelon in another way. He entirely disregarded the existence, division, and balance of orders which lay at the root of the old States-General and Provincial States, but he recommended the formation of a hierarchy of elective assemblies, parochial, municipal, and provincial, culminating in a National Assembly, all resting on the basis of landed property alone, and entrusted merely with the

duty of advising the Government. This violent departure from the traditional form of French assemblies was not sanctioned by the King, and Necker proposed to recur to the division by orders, but to follow the precedent of the States of Languedoc in the manner of the voting and in the number of the representatives of the commons. His provincial assemblies were not, however, at first to be elective bodies, though they were ultimately to become so. The King was to choose the first sixteen members; they were themselves to elect their colleagues, and they were to sit for two years. Necker proposed to invest them with very considerable powers both of administration and taxation, and gradually to confine the Parliaments to purely magisterial and judicial functions. Three provincial assemblies were actually established when the intentions of Necker about the Parliaments were treacherously disclosed. The Parliament of Paris at once refused to register the edict for a fourth provincial assembly, and such a storm of opposition arose that Necker abandoned his task. His resignation was given on May 19, 1781.[1]

But before these events had taken place, all real hope of restoring the finances had been destroyed by the war into which France had entered in support of the American Revolution. Turgot had solemnly warned the King that the first shot from a French cannon would make bankruptcy inevitable, and the King with his frequent good sense clearly saw the danger, though with his usual weakness he suffered himself to be overruled by those who were about him. The American war surrounded the Court and the Government with a new and genuine popularity. It turned the minds of men for a time from internal contests, and although it ended with a crushing naval defeat, and was at no

[1] See Lavergne, *Les Assemblées Provinciales.*

period particularly glorious to the French arms, it was pursued with great energy and crowned with ultimate success. The loss of Canada by France, in 1763, was more than balanced by the severance of the other American colonies from England. But the war which so humbled and depressed England left her rival burdened with a debt which she could never pay,[1] and inoculated with a passion for republicanism and revolution which it was no longer possible to resist. 'The American Revolution,' wrote Arthur Young a few years later, 'has laid the foundation of another in France, if Government do not take care of itself.' 'A strong leaven of liberty has been increasing every hour since the American Revolution.'[2]

From the time of the fall of Necker, the Government of France drifted for several years under a succession of feeble, extravagant, and incompetent ministers almost idly to its fate. Yet it is strange to observe how little the shadow of coming evil was at this time felt. The Court and capital had never been so brilliant and so charming. The King was very popular. The Queen was adored by her Court and not yet wholly unpopular with the nation; and the doctrine of the infinite perfectibility of man, which had long been in the ascendant, still gave the charm of extreme hopefulness to all French society and thought. When Turgot proposed his plan of national education to the King, he predicted that if it were adopted, 'the French people in ten years would be scarcely recognisable, and would infinitely transcend all other nations in their enlightenment, goodness, loyalty, and patriotism.'[3] Ségur has described, in some

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[1] For a calculation of the money cost of the American war to France, see Chérest, *La Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, i. 91.

[2] Pinkerton, iv. 140, 159.

[3] Loménie, *Les Mirabeau*, ii. 426.

admirably vivid pages, the optimism and the enthusiasm of French society during the American war. It was the time when the passion for nature and simplicity, and the revolt against all factitious and conventional distinctions, produced by the writings of Rousseau and by the imitation of English customs, was at its height. In the country houses the gardens of Le Nôtre with their long straight alleys, their symmetrical squares, and their carved trees, were replaced by the wilder beauties of the English garden. In society uniforms and decorations disappeared, and a republican simplicity of dress became general. In the theatres the absurd habit of representing ancient heroes and heroines in modern Court dress was suddenly discarded. In the Court the Queen systematically threw aside etiquette, and introduced a freer tone of manners and conversation. 'A word of praise from D'Alembert or Diderot was now more valued than the highest favours of a prince.' 'The republican maxims of "Brutus" were applauded at Court. Monarchs were disposed to support a people in rebellion against their King; the language of independence might be heard in the camps, the language of democracy among the nobles, the language of philosophy at the balls, the language of the moralist in the boudoir.' 'Opinions seemed to have lost their influence on passions. In those happy days men could always love those who thought differently from themselves.' 'Old doctrines and manners appeared at once ridiculous and wearisome, and the gay philosophy of Voltaire was supreme.' It was believed that the 'spirit of liberty would change the face of the world by enlightening it.' 'Everyone foresaw the happiest future. No one dreamed of a Revolution, though it was forming rapidly in opinions.' 'The advantages of old institutions and the freedom of new manners seemed to subsist together.' 'Never was a

more terrible awakening preceded by a calmer sleep, or by more seductive dreams.'[1]"

The genuine popularity of the American war greatly strengthened the Government, and the Peace of 1783 appeared to have secured for France a complete preponderance in Europe. The political and commercial alliance with Holland at the end of 1785 was a new triumph for French foreign policy, and a new blow to what was believed to be the waning influence of England; and France, as we have seen, fearlessly supported and stimulated the revolutionary and democratic spirit that had arisen in the Netherlands. Industry and commerce made a sudden bound after the Peace, and before 1789 the foreign commerce of France was double what it had been at the accession of the King.[2] Travellers were astonished at the vast works of internal navigation that were designed and accomplished, at the extraordinary growth of the commercial importance of St. Domingo, at the new docks and harbours that were constructed along the French coast, but especially at Cherbourg, at the splendour and growing opulence of the great provincial towns. Bordeaux was pronounced by Arthur Young in 1787 to be incomparably superior to Liverpool in wealth, commerce, and magnificence. With improved roads and more rapid public carriages which had been established by Turgot, a new life was felt in the provinces; and though agriculture lagged far behind commerce, a few good harvests had given it some impulse. The multiplication of agricultural societies, the rapid rise of rent, the rapid increase of the revenue derived from the duties on articles of food, were indis-

[1] *Mémoires de Ségur*, i. 22–28, 152–160.

[2] Lavergne, *Assemblées Provinciales*, p. 9. See, too, Taine, *Ancien Régime*, p. 402. 'The French trade,' wrote Arthur Young, 'has almost doubled since the Peace of 1763, but ours has increased not near so much.'—*Tour in France*, ch. xix.

putable signs of progress.[1] It was about this time that the use of the potato became general in France, and that Daubenton introduced the Spanish breed of sheep.[2] Population was increasing with extraordinary rapidity, but the country was becoming also visibly richer. Calonne, who had been made Controller-General at the close of 1783, borrowed in time of peace almost as largely as Necker in time of war,[3] and the success of his loans gave an appearance of great prosperity.

The luxury and expenditure of the Court continued unchecked,[4] and the millennial dream was unbroken. Intellectual activity was never greater. In 1774 it was computed that the book trade in Paris was four times as large as in London.[5] French ideas reigned in the chief Courts, in almost all the universities and academies of the Continent, and boundless vistas seemed on all sides opening. It was believed that the invention of the balloon by Montgolfier was about to give men the empire of the air, and that Mesmer had found a cure for all diseases. Lavoisier, with several other less distinguished labourers, now raised chemistry into a science. Lagrange and Laplace were giving a vast extension to astronomy; De Lisle and Haüy to mineralogy. The study of physiology, botany, comparative anatomy, and electricity advanced with gigantic strides; and in the enthusiasm that prevailed, it was imagined that physical science would soon unlock the secret of the universe and disclose the mystery of life.[6] In other

[1] Tocqueville, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 252–255; Gasquet, *Institutions politiques et sociales de l'Ancienne France*, ii. 353.

[2] Lavergne, *Economie Rurale de France*, i. 3, 4.

[3] 'Cinq cents millions d'emprunt en trois années de paix.' Michelet, *Hist.* xvii. 360.

[4] See Michelet, *Histoire de France*, xvii. 362, 363.

[5] Aubertin, *L'Esprit public au XVIIIme Siècle*, p. 482.

[6] See a striking picture of the approaches that were believed to have been made towards discovering the nature and genesis of life, in Cabanis, *Rapports du Phy-*

fields, the Oriental researches of Volney, the sculpture of Houdon, the paintings of David, the many noble works of architecture that were erected in Paris, the art criticisms which Diderot published annually between 1759 and 1781, the almost unparalleled success of the 'Mariage de Figaro' of Beaumarchais, excited a corresponding enthusiasm. Political clubs came into fashion about 1784, and gave a new energy to the movement of thought, while French society still maintained the character of intellectual brilliancy, that made it without a rival in Europe. The Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the Duc de Nivernais, the Prince de Beauvau, and many other of the leaders of society were passionately devoted to letters.[1] A spirit of innovation and speculation, a love of liberty and toleration, an immense hopefulness, and a disposition to underrate all difficulties, almost universally characterised French society.

The great writers indeed were passing rapidly away, and they left no successors. Montesquieu had died in 1755; Voltaire and Rousseau in 1778; D'Alembert in 1783; Diderot in 1784; Mably in 1785. But the work of popularising obscure and difficult knowledge, which was the supreme achievement of the eighteenth century, was never so industriously pursued. Buffon, illuminating the whole field of natural history with the charm of the most brilliant eloquence, had in this respect a transcendent influence, and the popularity of literary and scientific lectures was now at its height. The lectures of La Harpe on literature, of Fourcroy on chemistry, of Petit on anatomy, of Nollet on electricity, were thronged by all that was most brilliant in Parisian society. The empire of superstition seemed passing away like the

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sique et du Moral de l'Homme. Buckle has given an admirable picture of the passion for physical science that immediately preceded the Revolution. *Hist. of Civilisation,* i. 796–836.

[1] Ségur, ii. 34.

shadows of night before the rising sun. The questions about tickets of confession, Jansenist doctrines, and Ultramontane pretensions which had excited such an interest under Lewis XV. had disappeared amid general contempt, and the influence of the clergy, as an influence of superstition, seemed almost extinct. At the same time, though religious beliefs were rapidly waning, there never was a period less characterised by hardness, coldness, and selfishness. French society was much less frivolous, and also much more moral, than in the days of the Regency and of Lewis XV., and severe moral criticism was in fashion. It was noticed that the novels of Crébillon were now very generally excluded from the salons on account of their indecency, and that the 'Candide' of Voltaire was severely censured.[1] That part of morals, indeed, which grows out of the ascetic conception of the sinfulness of men, and which advocates self-restraint as the first of duties, was little taught;[2] but

[1] Ségur, ii. 33, 34.

[2] Burke, who hated the tendencies of French philosophy, has dwelt on its moral dangers with great power and acuteness: 'The greatest crimes do not arise so much from a want of feeling for others, as from an over-sensibility for ourselves, and an over-indulgence to our own desires. . . . In my experience I have observed that a luxurious softness of manners hardens the heart at least as much as an over-done abstinence. . . . I have observed that the philosophers, in order to insinuate their polluted atheism into young minds, systematically flatter all their passions, natural and unnatural They explode or render odious or contemptible that mass of virtues which restrain the appetite. These are at least nine out of ten of the virtues. In the place of all this they substitute a virtue which they call humanity or benevolence. By these means their morality has no idea in it of restraint, or indeed of a distinct and settled principle of any kind. When their disciples are thus left free, and guided only by present feeling, they are no longer to be depended upon for good or evil. The men who to-day snatch the worst criminals from justice will murder the most innocent persons to-morrow.'—*Correspondence*, iii. 213–215. These lines were written in June 1791, before the terrible confirmation of the last sentence which was furnished by the career of Robespierre.

the excessive sensibility which was the prevailing affectation, was only an exaggeration of a very real spirit of practical humanity.

Many new institutions of charity were founded. The differences of rank and class were perceptibly softening, and a new spirit of sympathy was abroad. Mothers of high rank were now eager, in obedience to the precepts of Rousseau, to nurse their own children. The Abbé de l'Epée had lately invented the deaf and dumb alphabet, and the Government threw itself ardently into the work of disseminating it. Valentin Haüy devoted himself with similar enthusiasm to the care of the blind. Pinel had begun his great researches into the cause and cure of insanity.[1]

There never was a period to which men afterwards looked back more fondly. 'He who did not live before 1789,' Talleyrand once said, 'has never known the charm of life.' 'The best and most virtuous men,' said another contemporary, 'saw the beginning of a new era of happiness for France and for all the civilised world.'[2] It was noticed by Malouet that the tone of manners had never been so gentle, or society so enchanting, or social liberty so great, as a few years before the horrors of the Revolution.[3] Ségur, returning from the American war, found, as he tells us, 'the Court and society of Paris more brilliant than ever; France proud of her victories and satisfied with the Peace; and the whole aspect of the kingdom so flourishing that, without the mournful gift of prophecy, it would have been impossible to foresee the abyss towards which a rapid current was hurrying us.' It was, he said, as when one has just climbed a high tower, looked for a moment on a boundless and glorious prospect stretch-

[1] See Rocquain, pp. 412, 413.
[2] Mathieu Dumas, quoted by Taine, p. 398.
[3] *Mém. de Malouet*, i. 66, 67.

ing beneath, and then grown dizzy, stumbled and fallen.[1]

Madame de Staël, when describing the period before the Revolution, has acutely and truly remarked that there is often a special charm about the decadence of Governments, for the feebleness that precedes their fall gives them an appearance of great gentleness and liberality.[2] That important changes were at this time impending over France, was indeed very evident. A close observer might have easily seen that the inequalities of taxation must before long be abolished, that the feudal system must be annihilated or mitigated, that the question of finance was becoming continually more desperate, that the monarchy must some day acquire something of a representative character. It was evident, too, that the King and especially the Queen were not blameless. England was a richer country than France, but the English Court exhibited little or nothing of the ostentatious extravagance of the Court of Versailles, and foreigners who compared the noble proportions of Greenwich and Chelsea Hospitals with the Palace of St. James's, declared that the English lodged beggars in palaces and kings in almshouses.[3] The Prussian Court, on which political and literary influences had lately concurred to throw a strong light, presented a still more impressive contrast. No clerk in the Prussian dominions worked harder than Frederick the Great. He might be seen at four o'clock in the morning, in uniform and in his top boots, seated at his desk examining the petitions of the humblest of his subjects, regulating the minutest details of civil and military administration. His personal expenses were

[1] *Mém. de Ségur*, ii. 28, 29.

[2] *Consid. sur la Rév.* i. 117.

[3] Hanway's *Defects of the Police* (1773), p. 281. It will be remembered that the present Buckingham Palace was only built under George IV., to whom, also, Windsor Castle owes very much of its magnificence.

managed with penurious economy. There was less luxury and comfort in his palace than in the home of an English nobleman, and it was the first principle of his Government that public revenues should be as much as possible applied to public purposes. What a contrast, it was said, to the enormous extravagance and the elaborate idleness of the French King, to the endless succession of hunts and balls and receptions and unmeaning ceremonies that filled up the greater part of his life.

But the manners of the French Court had been regulated by French habits, traditions, and tastes, and no French Sovereign seemed less likely than Lewis XVI. to arouse popular animosity. In the events which have been related and in the events which have still to be told, he always showed himself ready to support if not to originate measures of reform, amenable almost to a fault to the judgments of his ministers, completely free from any tendency to harshness or cruelty and from any desire to overstrain his authority. He had not a tinge of the characteristic faults which brought Charles I. to the scaffold and drove James II. into exile. As Burke truly said, he was 'a prince the acts of whose whole reign were a series of concessions to his subjects, who was willing to relax his authority, to remit his prerogatives, to call his people to a share of freedom not known, perhaps not desired, by their ancestors.'[1] No throne in Europe was surrounded with greater traditional respect than that which he occupied; and the unbroken loyalty of the French to their sovereigns, through every vicissitude of fortune and character, had long been a favourite national boast. To the best judges it would have seemed incredible that the nation which had borne so patiently the despotism, the vices, the incompetence and the political disasters of the long reign of

[1] *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

Lewis XV. should have brought his successor to the scaffold, and that France with her wealth and greatness, and her ancient and venerable civilisation, was soon to lie at the mercy of ferocious mobs, fanatics, and adventurers.

I have already quoted the curious passage in which John Adams in 1778 contrasted the popularity of the French King and Queen in Paris, with the extreme unpopularity of George III. in London.[1] Franklin and Frederick the Great were two of the most acute observers of their time. They had both of them special reasons and special opportunities for watching French affairs; but there is, I believe, no evidence that either of them caught the faintest glimpse of the political catastrophe that was impending. No English diplomatist was better acquainted with continental life than Sir James Harris, but as late as the close of 1786 he entirely disbelieved in the possibility of a Revolution in France. 'A Madame de Pompadour,' he wrote to Lord Carmarthen, 'or even a Madame de Barri will never effectually diminish or hurt the grandeur of the French monarchy, which is settled on a foundation beyond the reach of the follies of the Court to shake.'[2] 'There is a universal agreement,' wrote one of the ablest German contemporary observers, 'that at the beginning of the year 1787 no one in France had the faintest presentiment of the catastrophe that was preparing.'[3] 'I doubt,' said an excellent French observer, 'whether any period can be named in which the French monarchy enjoyed a higher degree of consideration than in the years between 1783 and 1787, that is from the end of the American war till the Revolution of Holland.'[4]

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[1] Vol. iv. p. 416.

[2] *Malmesbury Corresp.* ii. 248, 249.

[3] Gentz, 'Examen de la Marche de l'Opinion publique relativement à la Révolution Française,' *Mercure Britannique*, iii. 216.

[4] Ségur, *Politique de tous les*

The illusions of the nation were suddenly and sharply dispelled in the last months of 1786, when Calonne was obliged to confess that there was a deficit which, after much hesitation and variation, was at last reckoned at about 115 millions of livres,[1] and that he had no means of meeting it. As Turgot had predicted, the American war proved a fatal turning-point in French finance, and in the space of ten years not less than 1,630 millions had been borrowed.[2] The system of deferring accounts from year to year, and the extreme complexity in the manner of levying taxes, had led to almost inextricable confusion; but it was plain that there had been for a long time such a deficit in the ordinary annual revenue, and such an accumulation of extraordinary expenses, that nothing short of a complete reform and readjustment of taxation could save the country from bankruptcy. In order to meet the difficulty, Calonne recommended a measure which had not been adopted since the reign of Lewis XIII. It was to summon by royal authority an assembly called

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Cabinets de l'Europe, ii. 97. I may add the following striking passage by John Adams, which was written in 1787, and is the more remarkable because it was written in Europe, and written by a very able American statesman who had special means of knowing the state of France: 'After all the turbulence, wars, and revolutions which compose the history of Europe for so many ages, we find simple monarchies established everywhere. Whether the system will now become stationary and last for ever, by means of a few further improvements in monarchical Governments, we know not, or whether still further revolutions are to come. The most probable, or, rather, the only probable, change is the introduction of democratical branches into those Governments. If the people should ever aim at more they will defeat themselves; and, indeed, if they aim at this by any other than gentle means, and by gradual advances.'—Adams, *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States, Preface.*

[1] Calonne, *Etat de la France* (ed. 1790), pp. 36, 37. See, too, Rocquain, pp. 431, 439, 440; Chassin, *Génie de la Révolution*, p. 22.

[2] Taine, *Ancien Régime*, p. 403.

the Notables, consisting of the chief persons in the kingdom, to consult upon its affairs. This assembly was composed of 144 members of the privileged order. Seven princes of the blood were among them, and the remainder were drawn from the higher clergy and nobility, the Parliaments, the King's Council, the provincial States, and the municipal councils.[1]

They began their sittings in February 1787, and Calonne hoped to obtain by their assistance the requisite reforms, and especially to break down the exemptions of the privileged orders from taxation by the imposition of a general land tax. But he soon found that the Notables were less unanimous and less subservient than he had hoped. They insisted, in the first place, on an investigation of the financial proceedings of the minister, and they discovered such abuses that they speedily drove Calonne with disgrace from power. There were loud cries for the appointment of Necker to replace him, but Necker had lately been exiled, and was still in great disfavour with the Court, and in an ill-omened hour the Queen employed her influence in favour of Loménie de Brienne, the Archbishop of Toulouse. This supple, ambitious, immoral, and unbelieving churchman had made himself very acceptable in the gay circle of the Trianon, and had borne a conspicuous part in opposition to Calonne in the Assembly of Notables; but his talents were chiefly those of a courtier and an intriguer, and he was now placed in a position that needed the highest gifts of statesmanship and character. He attempted to imitate Calonne, as Calonne had tried to imitate Necker. He hoped, among other measures, to induce the Notables to vote a considerable land tax to be paid by all classes. But the Notables, who were themselves members of the

[1] Lavergne, *Assemblées Provinciales*, p. 102.

privileged class, though quite ready to recommend many reforms, recoiled from this measure, alleged that they were incompetent to carry it, refused even to recommend it, and declared that they left it to the King to determine what tax was most suitable. They were dissolved on May 25, 1787.

But although the Government failed in inducing the Notables to assist them in dealing with the vital and pressing question of finance, some other reforms of great importance were effected. Calonne, following in the steps of Fénelon, Turgot, and Necker, clearly saw that a wide diffusion of local self-government and representation should precede the establishment of any general system of constitutional liberty and would greatly facilitate the reorganisation of taxation, and he accordingly recommended to the Notables the establishment of a provincial State in every 'generality'[1] in which it did not exist. This very important recommendation received the warm approbation of the Notables, and it was carried into effect in 1787 by a royal edict which was promulgated by Brienne. The Notables did not, it is true, approve of the first design of Calonne, which was to constitute provincial assemblies of the type recommended by Turgot. They insisted that the three orders should be represented in a defined proportion, and that a member of the privileged orders should preside over every assembly, but they agreed without difficulty that the commons should have a double representation, that the three orders should vote not separately but together, and that elective councils should be established in every parish. At the same time, and with their approval, two other edicts of considerable importance were issued. Turgot had

[1] The 'généralité' was an ancient division of France, established to facilitate the collection of taxes and for all matters relating to finance.

established a free commerce of corn within the kingdom; but Brienne went much further, and an edict which remarkably anticipated the teaching of later political economists, fully authorised its exportation. The King only reserved to himself the power of suspending it in case of necessity for a year, and then only in provinces where such a suspension had been demanded by the provincial States. The 'corvée' also, or forced labour for the roads, which was the worst practical oppression of the peasantry, and which had been already abolished by Turgot, but restored after his fall, was now commuted into a money payment and passed finally out of the list of French grievances. The measure was, however, a less liberal one than that of Turgot, for the commutation was provided from taxes that fell solely on the commons.

The King by the mouths both of Calonne and Brienne had formally and repeatedly announced his wish and his determination to abolish those inequalities of taxation, which were the chief cause of the embarrassments of the country, and the great and just grievance of his poorer subjects.[1] The main object of his whole policy was to put an end to a ruinous deficit, by abolishing exemptions which were flagrantly unjust. He hoped that the Notables representing the privileged orders would have assisted him, and that with their support the measure could easily have been carried, but this hope was disappointed. At the same time it was noticed that no member of the Assembly spoke in favour of inequalities of taxation. All professed their full willingness to make large sacrifices of their class privileges, and an important section strenuously urged the necessity of abolishing the 'gabelle' or salt tax, which pressed most severely upon the poor. The debates did not turn

[1] See Chérest, *La Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, i. 146, 163, 204, 205.

upon the question of equal or unequal taxation, but upon the amount of the deficit; on the right of the Assembly to inquire into past expenditure; on the nature of the new taxes to be proposed; on the possibility of imposing a general and uniform tax without violating the privileges of the Pays d'Etat; on the amount of power which the Notables themselves possessed. Personal and factious ambitions, personal antipathies, and mistakes in management played a great part in the proceedings. To manage a deliberative Assembly, and especially an Assembly which is itself inexperienced, is an art which requires much experience as well as much skill, and skill of a particular kind in which Calonne was wholly wanting. He succeeded, much less by his proposed measures than by his language and demeanour, in irritating, dividing, and disorganising the Assembly.

The Notables had not the composition or authority of a representative body, and they had not the power of a legislative body; but the mere fact that the Crown had been driven by financial distress to seek their assistance; the unaccustomed spectacle of opposition and debate; the strong light thrown on the financial difficulties of the Government; and the failure of the proposed measures for alleviating them, had an immense and disquieting influence on public opinion. The Ministers announced to the Notables in the clearest terms that the King alone had a sovereign right of fixing the amount and proportion of the taxes, and that their task was confined to carrying out the royal designs and meeting the difficulties that were created by the extreme variety of customs, privileges, and administrations in the different provinces. But the Assembly showed much indisposition to accept so humble a sphere, and a theory of taxation which a few years before would have been perfectly unchallenged, now provoked much hostile

criticism. It was noticed that some of the bishops were the first to dispute it. The word 'States-General,' which had been for generations almost unheard in France, had been of late more than once publicly pronounced, and it passed rapidly from lip to lip. A fever of political excitement pervaded the country and seemed daily increasing, and as bankruptcy after bankruptcy took place the condition of the finances became clearly understood. Necker had shortly before published a work in three volumes on the administration of the finances, and not less than 80,000 copies of it were sold.[1]

Grimm at this time noticed the very ominous fact that the prevailing spirit of agitation and insubordination had already gained the army, that discipline was giving way, and that the soldiers were no longer disposed to maintain obedience.[2] Many causes operating through many years had contributed to this result. The system of Prussian discipline, and especially of corporal punishment, which some French generals in their admiration for Frederick the Great had incautiously introduced, excited profound discontent in the ranks, and the American war instead of strengthening had immensely impaired the military spirit. In general a considerable period of active service in a foreign country effectually extinguishes all political feeling in an army, and gives it such a degree of military discipline and enthusiasm that, under a good commander, there is little danger of the contagion of civil agitation penetrating to the ranks. But the American war being conducted on the part of France mainly by sea, the

[1] Mme. de Staël, *Consid. sur la Rév.* i. 111. An excellent and very detailed account of the proceedings of the Notables will be found in the valuable history of M. Chérest. See, too, Rocquain, pp. 431–445.

[2] Grimm et Diderot, *Mém. Hist.* vii. 336.

French army in America had no opportunity of distinguishing itself in the field, and remained almost inactive in the centre of a great democratic revolution. It returned to France saturated with republican ideas, and fully prepared to receive the seed which was so abundantly scattered. The division of classes that separated the French officers from the soldiers made the latter peculiarly open to democratic appeals, and this division had very recently been aggravated. As late as 1781, in the reaction that followed the fall of Necker, the Government had committed the amazing folly of issuing an ordinance excluding 'roturiers' even from the rank of sub-lieutenant, and providing that no officer could obtain the rank of captain who had not been noble for four generations. It would be impossible to conceive an enactment showing a more complete ignorance of the tendencies of the time, and it was one of the great causes of the disorganisation of the army.[1] The evil was more keenly felt on account of the enormous and scandalous multiplication of posts of high rank, created in order to be sold, and reserved for the privileged orders. Dubois-Crancé, who took a leading part in the military organisation of the Revolution, declared that in 1789 there were more than twelve hundred general officers in the French army; that since the ministry of Choiseul nearly every regiment had been divided for the express purpose of multiplying its officers; that the number of the superior officers had been in fact quadrupled, and that military grades had been created, sold, and distributed with such reckless profusion that, in one day, four thousand children had been made captains without troops and without any prospect of obtaining them.[2]

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[1] Compare Rocquain, pp. 396, 397; Chérest, i. 14–25; Ségur, *Mém. et Souvenirs*, i. 286–292.

[2] *Dubois-Crancé*, par Jung, i. 91, 107–110.

Joseph II., shortly before his death, told Ségur that the French Ministers had committed a great error in declining to throw themselves into the Eastern war, for the Parliament would then have been unable to refuse money to the King, and the ardour of the nation would have expended itself in the field of foreign conquest.[1] The judgment was not a disinterested one, nor was it that of a really wise man; but it is at least possible that a foreign war might have restored the efficiency of the army, preserved it from the contagion of the Revolution, and raised up some popular and trusted general on whom the Government might have relied. 40,000 or 50,000 men under a commander like Turenne or Condé might have given a very different aspect to Parisian politics.

On the dissolution of the Notables, the Parliament of Paris became the chief centre of the thickening drama of French politics. While the Notables were still sitting, it had registered a new loan of sixty millions; and it now without difficulty registered the edicts which the Notables had recommended for the establishment of the provincial Assemblies, for free trade in corn, and for the abolition of the corvées; but when the Government put forward a scheme for additional taxation in the form of a stamp duty and of a general land tax, the old parliamentary opposition was at once renewed. The Parliament denounced the extravagance of the Court, attempted without success to extort a detailed account of the public expenditure, disobeyed the peremptory order of the King to register the stamp duty, and finally took the momentous step of petitioning the King to convoke the States-General before imposing any new tax upon his people. The Government, startled and as usual vacillating, without giving any answer to the

[1] Ségur, *Mém. et Souvenirs*, iii. 558.

petition of the Parliament, withdrew for the present the stamp duty which had been first proposed, but sent back the land tax with peremptory orders to register it. The Parliament with still greater emphasis persisted in its resolution. It complained that it had vainly sought for information showing the necessity of imposing a new and disastrous tax after five years of peace. It declared that the nation alone through the States-General had the right of imposing new taxes, and it again petitioned the King to convoke that body.

It would be difficult to conceive a step of more tremendous significance and importance. As the Court of Peers sat with the Parliament, the two corporations representing with the highest authority the privileged classes now demanded the convocation of the States-General; repudiated formally the absolute power of the Crown, as it had existed for centuries, and branded as illegitimate the method of taxation which had been uniformly pursued in France for about three hundred years.[1] The act of the Parliament was an act of rebellion. Its motives were probably very mingled; but its popularity had never been so great. The Government resorted to the old measure of a bed of justice, and the edicts establishing the stamp duty and the land tax were duly registered at Versailles. Next day the magistrates formally declared the registration by a bed of justice null and illegal.

The war was thus openly declared, and fierce manifestations of popular applause showed that the Parliament had won the public feeling of Paris altogether to its side. The Parliament, pushing its advantages, ordered an inquiry into the administration of Calonne, pronounced the edicts for a stamp duty and a land tax

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[1] See Mounier, *Recherches sur les Causes qui ont empêché les Français de devenir libres*, p. 53.

'null and illegal,' and issued a strong protest against their publication. The Government responded by exiling the Parliament to Troyes.

The conflict resembled those in the preceding reign, but the spirit of agitation and independence in the country had enormously increased, and the aspect of Paris in the autumn of 1787 was almost that of a revolution. In the streets, in the theatres, around the chief public buildings there were demonstrations of the most alarming kind. The Government at once closed the clubs, and the streets were patrolled by a large military force. The Cour des Comptes, the Cour des Aides, and the Chatelet, the three law courts that ranked next after the Parliament of Paris, all supported that body and petitioned for its recall, and the two former strongly asserted the new and astonishing doctrine that the King could not impose taxes by his edicts, and that the assent of the States-General was necessary to their validity. All the provincial Parliaments assumed an attitude of the most virulent hostility, demanding the recall of the Parliament to Paris, the impeachment of Calonne, above all the convocation of the States-General. Serious measures of retrenchment had lately been adopted in the Palace, but the denunciation of Court and courtiers was unabated. The language employed had all the violence of revolution, and it was employed by the magistracy of France, by grave judicial bodies which were the most authorised exponents of the law. Once more, as on so many previous occasions, the Government flinched before opposition, and thereby fatally weakened its authority. It entered into a negotiation with the exiled Parliament, and agreed on certain conditions to recall it to Paris. The Parliament, in flagrant violation of the new doctrine it had just professed about its own incapacity in matters of taxation, agreed to prolong for two more years the second

'twentieth,' and to extend it to the clergy, who had hitherto been exempt, while the Government on their side abandoned the two obnoxious taxes. All attempts to abolish on a large scale the exemptions of the privileged classes, and to impose additional taxation sufficient to restore the finances, were for the present suspended.

The Parliament returned to Paris in September 1787 amid great manifestations of popular triumph and applause, more than ever confirmed in its attitude of resistance to the Court, more than ever determined to maintain that political character which a long course of events had so strangely given to a body which was naturally purely magisterial or judicial. It is not surprising under these circumstances that the truce should have been hollow and short. The clubs were still kept closed and the troops prepared for action. The King annulled the order for an inquiry into the administration of Calonne, and there were rumours of a possible *coup d'état*. Money was absolutely wanted, and as the Parliament refused its assent to new taxes, it was necessary again to borrow. The Ministers dreaded greatly the convocation of the States-General, which would at once give a totally new character to the Government of France, but they saw that it had become inevitable, and all that could be hoped for was a postponement. Brienne now proposed a loan of no less than 420 millions of francs to be issued by instalments over five years, at the end of which period he promised that the States-General should be convoked. All efforts to obtain a ministerial majority in the Parliament proved vain, and on November 19 after a long and anxious debate the King authoritatively forced the edict for the loan through, by a bed of justice. The Duke of Orleans protested against this act as illegal, and next day the Parliament issued a similar protest. The King ordered the register con-

taining their protest to be destroyed; banished the Duke of Orleans to the country, and imprisoned two active members of the Parliament by letters of 'cachet.' The Parliament protested against these measures and against all use of letters of 'cachet.' The provincial Parliaments at once joined in the fray, and it was at this time that Mirabeau wrote, 'France is ripe for a revolution.' As might have been expected, the Government loan was completely discredited by these proceedings and proved a total failure.

Two facts, somewhat apart from the chief current of events, must here be noticed. The Government, paralysed by internal dissensions, was obliged to acquiesce in the complete destruction of the French influence in Holland by the Prussian invasion, and the restoration of the House of Orange to full power under an Anglo-Prussian guarantee; and civil rights were at last conceded to the Protestants of France. The last measure had been advocated before the Notables by Lafayette and the Bishop of Langres, and had been very favourably received. Brienne, among whose faults intolerance cannot be reckoned, issued an edict for carrying it into effect, and after some violent opposition it was registered by the Parliament in January 1788.

The main conflict, however, continued without abatement. It is extremely curious to observe how, at this advanced stage, the popular and revolutionary movement was mainly guided by privileged bodies who were resisting additional taxation which was absolutely necessary, who were contending for an exemption from taxation which was the most odious and indefensible of privileges, and who nevertheless by their revolt against the theory of absolute monarchy and by their demand for the States-General had attained to the highest degree of popularity. It was this circumstance which explains the remarkable uncertainty of the fore-

cast of at least one most competent observer. Arthur Young in the autumn of 1787 noticed how the best judges in France clearly foresaw that they were on the eve of some great revolution in the Government, that a bankruptcy was probable if not inevitable, that the States-General alone could grapple with the evil, and that unless 'some master hand of very superior talent and inflexible courage was found at the helm, to guide events instead of being driven by them,' a great catastrophe was probable. Having faithfully recorded these opinions, he adds his own judgment. 'All agree that the States of the kingdom cannot assemble without more liberty being the consequence, but I meet with so few men who have any just ideas of freedom that I question much the species of this new liberty which is to arise. They know not how to value the privileges of the people; as to the nobility and the clergy, if a revolution added anything to their scale I think it would do more mischief than good.'[1]

The King must by this time have clearly seen the mistake that he had made in restoring, contrary to the judgment of both Turgot and Voltaire, the Parliaments which had been abolished by his predecessor. The necessity of obtaining their assent had no doubt qualified the despotism of the monarchy and had given France a kind of constitution, but no constitution could have possibly been less adapted to her wants. Two reforms were of the most pressing and urgent necessity. If bankruptcy was to be averted, it was absolutely necessary that new taxation should without delay be imposed on the privileged classes; and it was scarcely less necessary that the feudal system should be speedily commuted. But to both of these reforms the Parliaments were insuperable obstacles. They were aristocratic,

[1] Young's *Tour*. Pinkerton, iv. 140.

privileged, judicial bodies, consisting of men who were nearly all landowners, who themselves enjoyed the exemptions from taxation which it was necessary to abolish, who had for the most part purchased their privileges with money, and who had all the natural leaning of judicial bodies towards tradition, precedent, antiquated forms of property and rights. Their circumstances, their professional habits of thought, the narrowness produced by their purely legal education, all made them peculiarly unfit to exercise, in the interests of the entire community, a controlling influence over the vast and various field of legislation, and being much smaller bodies than the nobles and the clergy, the corporate spirit that pervaded them was much more concentrated and intense.[1] It is impossible to read the account of the proceedings of the provincial Assemblies throughout France, in the years before the Revolution, without being struck with the degree in which enlightened, reforming, and humane principles had begun to pervade the privileged classes. But the conservatism of the Parliament was much more than the conservatism of an aristocracy. It was the conservatism of judges; of judges who had purchased their position; of judges who were in the highest degree tenacious of their privileges; of judges who claimed an absolute right of veto. The conflicts under Lewis XV. had accustomed a large and able section of the Parliament to habits of systematic opposition, and to extreme jealousy of the Crown, and the events of the last few years had greatly strengthened these feelings. The provincial Assemblies of Necker were manifestly intended to supersede the political importance of the Parliaments. Necker himself had stated his anxiety to reduce them to purely judicial functions, and the assembly of the Notables was clearly meant

[1] See some excellent remarks on this in Mackintosh, *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, pp. 103, 104.

to counterbalance the influence of the Parliament of Paris.

And while the Parliaments were manifestly unfit to carry out the most indispensable reforms, their opposition was peculiarly dangerous. It is in the highest degree inexpedient that magisterial and judicial bodies should take a leading part in politics, and a systematic opposition to the Government conducted by the chief exponents of the law is of all oppositions the worst. It is the most dangerous, unnatural, and demoralising; the most fitted to lower the respect both for law and for government. Few causes contributed so much as the parliamentary opposition to break up the compact edifice of the French monarchy, to sap the ancient and deep-rooted traditions of obedience and loyalty.

The whole question of the relations of the Parliaments to the Crown was still unsettled. On the one side was the royal doctrine, confirmed by a long series of precedents, that the King had the right by holding a bed of justice to overthrow the plainest wishes of his Parliaments. On the other was the parliamentary doctrine that no measure was obligatory which had not been submitted to the deliberations, and had not received the free assent, of no less than thirteen Parliaments. The first doctrine led directly to despotism. The second led no less clearly to anarchy, and, as the King bitterly said, it would convert the monarchy of France into 'an aristocracy of magistrates.' And now the Parliament of Paris had gone still further, and destroyed both its own authority and that of the Sovereign, by declaring that no tax could be legitimately imposed on France except by the States-General.

The word had gone forth, and it was impossible to recall it. From all sides the spirit of discontent was rising with the suddenness of a tropical storm, overcasting a political sky which but a few months before

had appeared almost without a cloud. The right of registering edicts by a bed of justice; the right of arbitrary imprisonment and exile; the right of imposing taxes by a royal edict, had been for generations undisputed. The body which was now spoken of as an indispensable agent of taxation had met just four times in three hundred years, and none of these later States-General had claimed the power which the Parliament attributed to them. Whether the Parliament in launching its new doctrine had merely sought for a ready weapon against the Crown, or whether it believed that a body in which the privileged orders had hitherto had an indisputable ascendency would be more favourable to its interests than assemblies which were at present mainly or partly nominated by the Crown, it is impossible to say. It is at least certain that the seed fell on a soil that was prepared to receive it, and it rapidly became the doctrine of the most active classes in France that the States-General formed an essential part of the French Government, and that they should exercise habitually the same powers as the Parliament of England. It is no less certain that the Parliaments gave a mighty impulse to a movement which in a few months swept away every vestige of their own privileges and powers, and in a few years brought some of the most conspicuous of their leaders to the guillotine.

It is not surprising, it is certainly not unpardonable, that the King should have looked with much dislike on the demand for the States-General. Though his government had shown deplorable weakness and vacillation, he had exercised his powers with uniform moderation and with an earnest desire for reform. The abolition of the 'corvées,' of torture before trial, of serfdom on the royal domains; the reforms that had been introduced into the hospitals and prisons; the civil rights conceded to Protestants: the considerable economies* that had lately

been made at the Court; the removal of the restrictions on the commerce of corn and wine; the large and liberal system of provincial and parochial self-government which had been established, and his avowed determination to put an end to the unjust exemptions from taxation, sufficiently show the spirit of his reign. The parliamentary opposition seemed to him in a high degree ungrateful, as it was carried on by bodies which he had himself of his own free will restored; and selfish, as it was a struggle for class privileges by a section of the privileged class; and he probably underrated the strength and depth of the national discontent that sustained it. But although he desired to exercise his rightful powers mildly and moderately, he desired also to transmit them unimpaired to his successors. It was evident that they were being one by one assailed. The dark unknown future of the States-General, with the dangerous questions that were certain to arise relating to their powers and their composition and to the possible transformation of the monarchy, filled him with alarm. When it appeared necessary, he consented, indeed, to promise the convocation of that body, and there was not the smallest reason to believe that he would fail in his promise; but he asserted strongly that as King of France it was for him and for him alone to summon it; his language in promising it seemed to foreshadow an assembly that would be rather consultative than legislative; and he postponed the convocation till 1791.

By that time it was hoped that the present effervescence would have subsided, and the provincial, municipal, and parochial councils which had been lately established would have taken root. It must not be forgotten that three-fourths of France was now passing through a great and fundamental change of administration. The absolute power which had once been exercised by the intendants had been taken away. The old routine of administra-

tion had been suddenly broken. New assemblies with large functions of local government had been created. Provinces which were totally unaccustomed to self-government and had long been sunk in a profound political apathy were violently disturbed by a great experiment in government; by the agitation of popular election; by the rise of untried men to power; by the inevitable conflict between the supporters of the old and of the new order. The proceedings of the new provincial Assemblies were on the whole very encouraging, and showed great promise of usefulness; there was every reason to hope that a real step had been taken towards putting an end to the chaos of heterogeneous and conflicting administrations which had made the government of France so difficult, but as yet everything was in a state of transition. When the new provincial bodies were consolidated, they might bear a great part in the election of the States-General.

If time had not been pressing, if the finances had been in such a condition that a great and radical change in the system of taxation had not been a matter of immediate necessity, the policy of the Government would probably have been a wise one, and a national representation might have arisen securely and tranquilly out of local self-government. But this essential condition was wanting. With the failure of the loan it was becoming evident that the Government must choose between bankruptcy and the discovery of some method of uniform and productive taxation which would put an end to the innumerable exemptions of classes, provinces, and towns. But what chance was there of such a reform when, in order to effect it, it was necessary to obtain the assent of the Parliament of Paris, of the provincial Parliaments, of the Pays d'Etat, and perhaps also of the Cours des Comptes and of the Cours des Aides?[1]

[1] See Necker, *Œuvres*, ix. 46, 47.

The situation became almost daily more tense, and the language of the hostile parties was such that reconciliation seemed impossible. It was becoming more and more evident to Brienne that it was necessary to do again, but under circumstances infinitely more dangerous and difficult, what had been done by the chancellor Maupeou in the last reign. The word bankruptcy was now in every mouth. Incendiary placards appeared on the walls of Paris. The Queen as the special patron of Brienne was growing daily more unpopular, and was accused of exercising a preponderating influence in the councils. Troops were pouring from the provinces into Paris, and there were all the signs of a coming conflict. On May 5, 1788, the first great blow was struck, when two of the most conspicuous opponents of the Court were by order of the King arrested by soldiers in the midst of the Parliament. On May 8, the Parliament was summoned to Versailles, and the King proceeded to hold a bed of justice. After severely and angrily rebuking the Parliament for its conduct during the past year, he ordered six edicts to be read and registered, which annihilated its political, and greatly restricted its judicial, functions. By the first two edicts a number of new law courts were instituted, to which all civil and criminal cases hitherto tried by the Parliaments were transferred, except civil cases of over twenty thousand livres, and criminal cases relating to the privileged orders of nobles and ecclesiastics. The number of members in the Parliaments was greatly reduced. The third and fourth edicts were intended, like the abolition of the venality of offices in the time of Maupeou, to conciliate the genuine reformers. They abolished the 'tribunals of exception' and torture after condemnation.[1] The fifth edict, which was the

[1] The 'Question préparatoire' had been abolished by Necker in 1780, but the 'Question préalable' was not abolished till 1788, and

most important, constituted a new tribunal with the sole right of verifying and registering laws for the kingdom. It was to be called the 'Cour Plénière,' and to be composed of a number of great dignitaries selected by the King. It was to have the power of remonstrance, but the King was to have the right of overcoming its resistance by the usual method of a bed of justice, and he was to have an independent and exclusive power of borrowing. If new taxes were required before the assembly of the States-General, they were to be registered by the 'Cour Plénière,' but this registration was only to have a provisional effect till the States-General had actually met. The taxes were then to be definitely enacted by the King 'on the deliberations' of that body. The sixth edict forbade the Parliaments to unite on any subject, public or private, till further orders.[1]

Such was the new constitution or form of government imposed on France by the sole and despotic authority of the King. All consideration of its intrinsic merits and defects appeared insignificant in comparison to this fact, and it was immediately followed by an aristocratic revolt which was the prelude of the democratic Revolution of 1789. Even the promise of a more speedy convocation of the States-General had no effect in mitigating the blow, and the language in which it was announced was understood to imply that the Government intended this body to be little more than the assembly of Notables and invested merely with

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even then the King reserved his right to restore it if, after a few years' experience, the judges pronounced it necessary. The 'Question préparatoire' was torture for the purpose of compelling the accused person to avow his crime. The 'Question préalable' was torture applied after condemnation, for the purpose of compelling the condemned man to name his accomplices.—Chérest, *Chute de l'Ancien Régime*, i. 454, 455.

[1] Rocquain, pp. 468, 469.

consultative powers. The Parliament protested vehemently against its own extinction, and the various law courts in Paris pronounced all that had been done to be illegal, while throughout the country provincial Parliaments assembled in defiance of the royal mandate, and issued proclamations which in various forms and with various degrees of emphasis were direct appeals to revolution. The members declared any Frenchman 'infamous and a traitor to his country' who accepted office in the new tribunals 'illegally established,' bound themselves in some places by oath never to lend themselves directly or indirectly to carrying out the new edicts, stigmatised the ministers who had advised the late measures as 'traitors to the King and the nation,' and pronounced the ascription of despotic power to the Sovereign to be contrary to the fundamental laws of the kingdom. 'The people,' said the Parliament of Toulouse, 'having no longer any barrier between themselves and the King, there remains to them only the consciousness of their strength.'[1]

Were these idle words? Could the Parliaments, could the gentry of the country who were virtually in a state of insurrection, count upon popular support? The question was a difficult and an all-important one, but it seemed at first probable that it would be answered in the affirmative. The whole legal profession, nearly all the public writers of France, seemed on the side of the Parliaments. Paris was surging and seething with indignation, but as yet kept down by an overwhelming military force, while the great mass of the peasantry in large districts seemed prepared to take arms in defence of their provincial Parliaments. There was scarcely any province where the new edicts did not produce riots, and in some provinces these riots amounted

[1] Rocquain, p. 472.

to insurrection. In Pau the people compelled by force the ejected magistrates to resume their seats. In Brittany the abolition of the Parliament was violently resisted. Almost the whole province was under arms, and a number of Breton noblemen were thrown into prison for petitioning and protesting against the abolition. In Dauphiné, the tocsin sounded from the church towers, and thousands of peasantry from the mountains took arms to defend their provincial liberties. There were furious and bloody conflicts with the soldiers, and the insurgents so far succeeded that the Government consented in this province to make terms with them, and even to restore the old provincial States which had not existed for a century and a half.

There were grave signs of discontent among the officers of the army, and all justice was suspended by the impossibility of finding lawyers to serve in the new courts. Even the clergy refused to support Brienne and to vote the subsidies he expected. Bishops formally protested against the extinction of the Parliaments and the establishment of the 'Cour Plénière,' denied that taxes could be imposed by the will of the Sovereign, and joined with the rest of the nation in demanding the States-General.[1]

Deserted by almost all in whom he trusted, Brienne at last bowed before the storm. On August 8, 1788, the nation was startled by a decree suspending the new 'Cour Plénière,' and convoking the States-General for May 1, 1789. A week later the calamity came which had long been dreaded, and the Government acknowledged and declared its bankruptcy, ordering that for six weeks the payments of the State should be partially made in paper with a forced circulation. On

[1] Rocquain, Michelet, Sismondi. See, too, Mounier, *Recherches sur les Causes qui ont empêché les Français de devenir libres*, i. 44, 45.

August 25, Brienne resigned his office amid a storm of execration, and Necker was once more called to the management of the finances.

He undertook the task reluctantly, for he well knew that it was a hopeless one, and that the fifteen precious months which had been wasted under Brienne had ruined all prospect of a peaceful solution. He found not more than a few hundred thousand francs in the treasury, the taxes anticipated, credit absolutely ruined, even the funds which had been recently subscribed for the hospitals fraudulently seized by the late Minister,[1] several millions of francs required for the first week. The confidence, however, inspired by his name restored the State to solvency. With a rare patriotism he pledged his whole private fortune for the public payments, and a number of large capitalists rallied around him. In one morning the public funds rose thirty per cent.[2] The exiles were recalled. The many persons who had been flung into prison during the late troubles were released, and the suppressed Parliaments were once more restored.

The constant fluctuations of policy, the alternate violence and concession during the last few years, had by this time produced an agitation in France, which it was impossible to repress, and extremely difficult to guide. The traditional feelings of loyalty and respect had been fatally impaired. The privileged classes had been separated from the Throne and driven into violent opposition, while the appearance of union among them was very deceptive. The nobles, who had caught much of the spirit of the philosophic movement, were in general very anti-clerical, while among the clergy the bishops and the curés were greatly divided. In the

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[1] Sismondi, xxi. 257.

[2] Mme. de Staël, *Cons. sur la Rév.* i. 159.

autumn of 1787, Arthur Young painted the situation in a single phrase: 'A great ferment amongst all ranks of men, who are eager for some change without knowing what to look to or hope for,'[1] and the agitation was enormously increased when the Parliament of Paris, stultifying its whole history, declared that no tax could be legitimately imposed without the consent of the people by the States-General, and when Brienne in the name of the King had promised the speedy convocation of that body. It had not been assembled since 1614, and the prospect filled France with the wildest hopes. The question at once rose, in what form it was to assemble. The former States-General had met at a time when the democracy of France was in its infancy; the third order had only a little more than a third part of the representation,[2] and the three orders voted separately, so that the two privileged orders whenever they were united could command the situation. The same custom of the three orders deliberating apart, had subsisted in all the ancient provincial States, with the exception of that of Languedoc, where the three orders formed only a single chamber and voted together, and where the number of the deputies of the third estate was equal to that of the nobles and clergy combined. We have seen how the example of Languedoc was proposed for adoption by Fénelon, and how it was actually adopted in the provincial Assemblies, that were formed by Necker in 1778, and by Brienne in 1787.[3] In the face of the growing importance of the commons, it was plain that

[1] Pinkerton, iv. 140.

[2] In the States-General of 1614 there were 192 bourgeois, 132 nobles, and 140 ecclesiastics; in the States-General of 1588 the numbers were 191, 104, and 134; in those of 1566, 150, 72, and 104. *Œuvres de Necker*, ix. 72.

[3] Lavergne, *Assemblées Provinciales*, pp. 15, 16; Mme. de Staël, *Cons. sur la Rév.* i. 170.

the third order would never be content with the position it held in the States-General of 1614.

It would have probably been better if the King had settled by his own authority the form in which the States-General should meet; but this was not done, and Brienne gave an enormous scope to political discussion, and also virtually abandoned the authority of the Crown by formally inviting the opinion of all the writers and bodies corporate in the kingdom, on the subject. Necker, adopting a similar policy, again assembled the Notables to discuss the question. They were emphatically in favour of the precedent of 1614, and the Parliament of Paris took the same view, though it soon after, alarmed by the unpopularity of its advice, partially receded, stating that neither law nor constant usage fixed the number of each order, and that the decision must rest with the King. But the immense force of public opinion, expressing itself by innumerable pamphlets, memoirs, and petitions pouring in from every province and town, now turned with irresistible power in the democratic direction. Rousseau had specially denounced the old constitution of the States-General; and it was sufficiently obvious that if the two privileged orders had a complete ascendency, the very reforms which were most needed might never be carried. The Abbé Sieyès in a book which produced an immense impression, and of which 30,000 copies were sold in three weeks, urged that the third estate, or commons, had hitherto been nothing, and that it ought to be supreme; and the question immediately became the most pressing in French politics. The long indecision on the subject was especially unfortunate, and it was one great cause of the democratic and levelling direction which the stream now took.

Immediately after the separation of the Notables,

all the princes, with the exception of the Duke of Orleans, signed a memorial to the King, in which, in the name of the nobles, they protested against any deviation from the forms of 1614, and asserted that the writings which were pouring in from almost every corporation in France showed clearly that a spirit of reasoned insubordination and contempt for the laws was abroad. If, they continued, the ancient privileges of the two upper orders in the States-General were curtailed, those orders would have a right to refuse to confirm their degradation by appearing in that body, and they might dispute the legality of its proceedings.[1]

At last, after some hesitation, a royal edict, on December 27, partially solved the question. The King decided, in opposition to the opinion of the majority of the Notables, that the commons should have a double representation, thus making their representatives equal in number to those of the two other orders united. Such an increase of numbers was of no importance if the three orders voted separately, but if they voted either habitually or occasionally together it was of the utmost consequence. But this vital question of separate or joint voting was left undecided, to be settled only when the States-General met; and it continued to divide France fiercely, and to dig a chasm between the privileged orders and the people. By a report of the same council the King announced the future suppression of letters of 'cachet,' the establishment of liberty of the Press, and a periodic meeting of the States-General for the revision of the finances.[2]

This was followed, on January 24, 1789, by royal letters prescribing the method of election for the States-General. The precedent of 1614 was in its main out-

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[1] Sismondi, xxi. 279, 280. See, too, on the deliberations of the Notables on this subject, Chérest ii. 195–207.

[2] Mme. de Staël, *Considérations sur la Révolution*, i. 177.

lines followed, with some considerable enlargements that had been recommended by the Notables. The nobles and the ecclesiastics of all classes were to elect their representatives separately and directly. The elections for the commons, or third estate, were to be conducted on a different and complicated system. The suffrage was almost universal, a vote being given to every Frenchman who was twenty-five years old, who had a settled abode and who paid direct taxes; but these voters were not to vote directly for members of the States-General, but for members of numerous electoral bodies, to whom the ultimate choice was entrusted. The elections were so arranged that those of the provinces were to be completed before those of Paris began.

The months that followed were among the most agitated and critical that France had ever undergone, and it was at this time that the revolutionary spirit, which had hitherto been almost confined to the great centres of population, began to pervade the whole country. To the best and most sagacious judges, the conduct of Necker during this crisis has appeared very blamable; and to his grave faults of judgment and character they have attributed much of the calamities that followed. History is full of examples of men who, possessing to an eminent degree certain intellectual and moral qualities of the highest value, were placed by an unhappy fate in situations where those particular qualities were almost wholly useless, and where a totally different set were urgently required. Such was at this time the position of Necker. In a regular parliamentary Government he might have been an excellent Chancellor of the Exchequer, or a safe, sound, and sagacious Prime Minister; but he had nothing of that dazzling personality which can fascinate and lead great masses of excited men; nothing of that spirit of com-

mand, daring, and initiative, which was at this time imperatively needed. French public opinion was now like a ship driven before a furious gale, with no hand at the helm. Everything was undecided and in question —the nature of the States-General, the limit of their powers, the reforms they were to effect. The nation was seething with agitation, maddened by Utopias and subversive political theories, which were disseminated through a thousand channels and through every province. As there had been no States-General since 1614, there was a total want of political experience; and there were none of the party lines, organisations, and traditions, which in a settled parliamentary Government at once direct and restrain the torrent of opinion.

It was pre-eminently a time when a great minister would have boldly assumed the direction of opinion, placed a clear programme before the electors, defined and limited the reforms which he meant to ask the States-General to sanction. But Necker adopted a totally different course. He had no sympathy with the principles of the 'Contrat Social,' which were now dominant in France, and he had a strong constitutional dislike to all revolutionary changes. Considering, he has himself said, the dangers attending great political changes, the difficulty of forecasting their issue and of regulating their course, he would never have convoked the States-General had he not found that body solemnly promised under his predecessor. If he could have followed his own wishes he would have occupied himself in carrying out, with the assistance of the provincial Assemblies, a long series of administrative reforms which might have greatly ameliorated the condition of the country without producing any strong passions or convulsions.[1] Such a policy was no longer

[1] *Œuvres de Necker*, ix. 38, 39.

open to him, but he determined, at least, to restrict as much as possible the circle of his action, and to postpone, if he could not avoid, the most important decisions.

Timid, irresolute, and cautious to a fault, it was the character of his mind to see with special clearness the possible dangers and evils of any course that was proposed, and he shrank instinctively from any step which, by bringing him into opposition to strong currents of opinion, might imperil the high degree of esteem which he enjoyed and to which he most tenaciously clung. By assembling the Notables he had shown that he had no fixed policy of his own on the great question of the composition of the States-General, and it was now his manifest policy to ask advice on all sides, to commit himself to nothing, and to leave the nation to find its own way and to frame its own programme. Even after the elections had been completed, he displayed the same fatal inaction. The States-General, from the complete inexperience of their members, and from the circumstances of excitement under which they were elected, required more than almost any other Parliament firm and skilful guidance. But Necker met them without any clear and definite plan; and when Mirabeau, who alone possessed the talents that might have ridden and directed the storm, desired to support him, he met the overtures of the great tribune with freezing and contemptuous indifference.[1]

[1] See especially the *Mémoires de Malouet*, i. 246, 247, 250–253, 282, 283, 293, 297, and many other passages in the same work. It must be remembered, however, that Mirabeau was at this time a man whose character was completely discredited, and whose genius was only very partially recognised. Adam Smith was acquainted with Necker, and he judged him with much severity. He said, 'He is but a man of detail,' and predicted that he would fail totally in a foremost place. See Mackintosh, *Vindic. Gall.* p. 30.

There was something of timidity, something of pride, something of a kind of constitutional pedantry, and something of simple miscalculation in the attitude he assumed. When he was remonstrated with, he said that he considered it wrong for a minister to interfere in any way with popular elections; and when he was further pressed, he added, 'What would you have me do when there is no longer any obedience in any quarter, and when we are not sure of the troops?'[1] Military discipline, indeed, was only too evidently giving way, and bands of soldiers might be seen in the early summer of 1789 marching through the streets of Paris, shouting, 'Long live the Third Estate!' and 'We are the soldiers of the nation!' When public opinion was so excited and disorganised, Necker deemed it best to temporise, to be governed by circumstances, to wait until the nation had clearly determined its wishes. To an undecided and desponding man, who was conscious that he was surrounded by enemies at the Court and in the Council, who knew that a single false step might lead to a catastrophe, and who was confronted with the immediate and pressing necessity of meeting a great famine, such a course had an irresistible attraction, and it does not appear to have been as much condemned by contemporaries as by posterity. Malouet, who has severely blamed it, acknowledges that the great majority of the more moderate of the politicians who afterwards formed the Constituent Assembly, agreed with Necker that the King should propose no plan and adopt no important measure till after the first deliberation of the States-General.[2] But by leaving the country without control or guidance in a moment of supreme crisis and agitation, Necker suffered the revolutionary passions to acquire a force and a scope

[1] *Mém. de Malouet*, i. 254, 255. [2] Ibid. i. 259.

which placed them beyond the reach of any statesmanship.

Malouet, who was one of the most sagacious judges of this period of the Revolution, has expressed his firm conviction that at this time popular opinion had only fixed itself irrevocably on two points, the convocation of the States-General and the doubling of the representatives of the Third Estate, and that the Government could in all other points have effectually guided and limited the movement for change. The sovereign power still retained its authority, and it was as yet by no means obnoxious to the democratic party. The recent conflict with the Parliaments had been essentially a conflict between the Crown and the privileged orders, in which the Crown was contending for a system of taxation which would lighten the burden of the people. Necker has borne an emphatic testimony to the complete honesty with which, both in public and private, the King was resolved to carry out his promise of convoking the States-General, though he must have well known that it would give a representative character to the Government of France.[1] The doubling of the number of the representatives of the Third Estate, which was the first great triumph of the popular party, was carried out with his cordial approbation, and contrary to the opinion of the majority of the Notables; and it was remarked that on this occasion the Queen was for the first time present at the Council, as she desired to give her sanction to the measure.[2] It was believed that the situation resembled that of Sweden under Gustavus III., when a popular king, supported by the democracy, engaged in a successful struggle with the privileged orders. All over

[1] *Œuvres de Necker*, ix. 38.

[2] Mme. de Staël, *Considérations sur la Révolution*, i. 180.

the Continent—in Sweden, in Germany, in Poland, in Hungary, in Bohemia, and in France—the diets, assemblies, or parliaments which represented the privileged orders had during the eighteenth century been hostile to reform, while Catherine, and Frederick, and Joseph II., and Leopold of Tuscany, and Gustavus III. of Sweden, and Charles III. of Spain had been the great reformers of their age.[1] The Prince who was afterwards Lewis XVIII., addressing the municipality of Paris in 1789, said that 'a great revolution was impending, and that the King by his dispositions, his virtues, and his supreme rank, was its natural chief.'[2] The edict and report of December 27, 1788, were received with general applause,[3] and Madame de Staël has even stated that at this late period 'the authority of the King over the minds of men was more powerful than ever.'[4] Nor was the spell quite broken in the agitated weeks that followed. I have already mentioned the remarkable fact that all, or nearly all, the instructions furnished by the constituents to their representatives in the States-General, while urging the largest and most searching reforms, expressly directed them to maintain the authority and dignity of the King.[5]

It seemed, indeed, as if the monarchy was the last of the old institutions of France which was in danger; but a spirit of insubordination and passion had for some years been abroad, and the unregulated excitement engendered by the elections was not likely long to confine itself within any barriers. 'It was as much

[1] See on this subject Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, pp. 107–138.

[2] Mme. de Staël, i. 177.

[3] See Necker, *Œuvres*, ix. 68, 78.

[4] *Considérations*, i. 177, 178.

[5] Malouet, *Mém.* i. 265. M. Chassin, who is a violently democratic writer, is obliged to acknowledge this fact, though he tries to attenuate its importance.—*Génie de la Révolution*, pp. 329, 333.

the fashion,' the Prince of Ligne once said, 'to disobey under Lewis XVI. as to obey under Lewis XIV.' 'Under Lewis XIV.,' the old Marshal Richelieu said to Lewis XVI., 'no one ventured to utter a complaint; under Lewis XV. they spoke low; under your Majesty they speak aloud.'[1] 'The universal spirit,' wrote Malouet, describing the elections of 1789, 'was that of independence. Clergy, nobles, Parliament, third estate, all wished an increased power. . . . The nobles of the provinces would no longer endure the superiority of those of the Court. The inferior clergy wished to share the dignities of the higher clergy; the officers and subalterns of the army used a similar language. . . . The word liberty was for ever ringing in the ears of an ignorant populace,' and they understood it in its widest and most extravagant sense.[2] The electoral meetings in every parish maintained a constant fever of excitement. In three or four months there are said to have been at least 40,000,[3] and they carried the spirit of agitation and discussion into the remotest village. At the invitation of the Government, 'cahiers,' representing the grievances and conveying the instructions of the three orders, were prepared in every parish, and all over France the busiest brains were employed in collecting, comparing, and elaborating grievances.

Innumerable newspapers sprang into existence, and the activity of the political press was unequalled. One of the most remarkable signs of the enormous intensity of political life in England during the civil war and the Commonwealth, is to be found in the vast literature of pamphlets and broadsides that was then suddenly produced. In France and on a larger scale, the election of 1789 at once produced the same phenomenon, and it

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[1] Aubertin, p. 478. [2] *Mém. de Malouet*, i. 293, 294.
[3] Chassin, p. 243.

continued for a long time without diminution. In the last months of 1788 a private collector is said to have accumulated no less than 2,500 pamphlets which had recently appeared.[1] Arthur Young, who had known England in several periods of great political excitement, had never seen anything which even faintly approached the activity of the French political press when he visited Paris in the summer of 1789. 'The business,' he says, 'going forward at present in the pamphlet shops of Paris is incredible. I went to the Palais Royal to see what new things were published, and to procure a catalogue of all. Every hour produces something new. Thirteen came out to-day, sixteen yesterday, and ninety-two last week. We think sometimes that Debrett's and Stockdale's shops in London are crowded, but they are mere deserts compared to Desein's and some others here, in which one can scarcely squeeze from the door to the counter. The price of printing two years ago was from twenty-seven to thirty livres per sheet, but now it is from sixty to eighty livres. The spirit of reading political tracts, they say, spreads into the provinces, so that all the presses of France are equally employed. Nineteen-twentieths of these productions are in favour of liberty, and generally violent against the clergy and nobility. . . . Is it not wonderful that while the press teems with the most levelling and even seditious principles, which, put in execution, would overturn the monarchy, nothing in reply appears, and not the least step is taken by the Court to restrain this extreme licentiousness of publication? It is easy to conceive the spirit that must thus be raised among the people. But the coffee-houses in the Palais Royal present yet more singular and astonishing spectacles; they are not only crowded within, but other expectant crowds

[1] Chérest, ii. 254. See, too, Chassin, pp. 133-135.

are at the doors and windows listening *à gorge deployée* to certain orators who from chairs or tables harangue each his little audience. The eagerness with which they are heard, and the thunder of applause they receive for every sentiment of more than common hardiness or violence against the present Government, cannot easily be imagined. I am all amazement at the Ministry permitting such nests and hotbeds of sedition and revolt, which disseminate amongst the people every hour principles that by-and-by must be opposed with vigour, and therefore it seems little short of madness to allow the propagation at present.'[1]

Another agency, more terrible and more powerful than any mere political propagandism, was, however, now hastening the Revolution. At the very time when the promise of the States-General had let loose the torrent of speculations, and passions, and wild hopes and fears, a great famine fell upon the land. A long drought in the summer of 1788, and a hailstorm almost unexampled in the extent of its devastations, were followed by an extremely bad harvest and by the severest winter that had been known in France for eighty years. The olives, the mulberries, the chestnut forests over great districts were almost totally destroyed. Bread rose quickly to famine price. The distress was as acute in the towns as in the country. Manufactures and industry in all their forms had already suffered deeply from the derangement of the national finances. The English competition which followed the recent commercial treaty had almost annihilated some of its important branches and thrown thousands of workmen out of employment, and the destruction of the mulberry trees now ruined the silk manufacture. In Lyons alone 40,000 workmen employed in this industry were left without bread.

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[1] Pinkerton, iv. 169.

Many master manufacturers left the country, and countless factories were closed. Abbeville, Amiens, and Rouen were equally distressed, and great numbers of workmen are said to have died of literal starvation.

Disease springing from insufficient nourishment rapidly spread. The roads were infested with famished brigands. The bakers' and butchers' shops, the mills, the offices where duties were levied on provisions, were everywhere attacked. There were almost daily conflicts between the soldiers and the populace, and all the great towns were besieged by starving countrymen seeking for employment. In Paris, where great public works had already produced an unnatural agglomeration of workmen, the number of the indigent soon tripled. In the single quarter of St. Antoine there were 30,000. A fourth part of the population of the city are said to have been driven in the winter of 1788–1789 to sell their clothes and tools and furniture, and it was easy on the smallest pretext to collect thousands of desperate and hungry men, ready to welcome any change and to take part in any enterprise. The freezing of the Seine in December greatly added to the difficulty of supplying the city with food. But the distress was never greater than at the time of the opening of the States-General. The whole country was disorganised by famine, and in the four months before the capture of the Bastille there had been more than 300 violent outbreaks in France.[1]

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this famine among the causes of the French Revolution. It gave the revolutionary movement its army, and its impulse, and its character of desperate and savage earnestness. The presence in Paris of a vast multitude of idle and half-starving men, largely re-

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[1] Taine, *La Révolution*, i. 4–14, 30, 33; Chassin, pp. 292–296; Michelet, xvii. 455, 456.

cruited from the provinces, at a time when political excitement was at its height, and when the discipline of the army had been fatally corrupted, amply accounts for the scenes of violence that followed. Whenever a legislative body is elected on a very low suffrage, a bad harvest is likely to have a great influence on elections, for the minds of men are then full of uneasiness, prone to change, and readily turned against the Government. But this election, which was beyond all others critical and dangerous, took place not merely amid distress, but amid famine. Necker showed great skill and energy in supplying the capital with food, but it was easy to persuade an ignorant and starving populace that the Government were responsible for all they suffered. 'It appears plain to me,' wrote Arthur Young, 'that the violent friends of the commons are not displeased at the high price of corn, which seconds their views greatly, and makes any appeal to the common feeling of the people more easy and much more to their purpose than if the price were low.'[1] At the time when the violent scenes of 1789 began, food in Paris was almost at famine rates, and it was computed that there were not less than a hundred and twenty thousand destitute persons in the city, who depended wholly on public works for their employment.[2]

The aims and dispositions of the electors were clearly shown by the 'cahiers' of the three orders. It was plain that there was no alliance between the nobles and the clergy, and among the wishes most strongly expressed in the cahiers of the former class were the suppression of tithes and of religious orders, the establishment of perfect liberty of conscience, and the sale of a portion of the ecclesiastical property, in order to restore the prosperity of the finances. It was evident,

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[1] Pinkerton, iv. 169.

[2] Taine, *La Révolution*, i. 33.

too, that the nobles were as far as possible from being animated by a general hostility to reform. They desired the establishment of constitutional government by periodic assemblies of the States-General, complete individual liberty, and a crowd of reforms in the administration of the finances and of justice. Almost with one voice they announced their readiness to abandon their exemption from direct taxation; their determination to accept a reasonable money commutation for their feudal rights; their wish to see all the higher ranks in the army thrown open to commoners. If these three measures had been accomplished, almost every serious grievance which the country suffered from its aristocracy would have been removed. On the other hand, the nobles insisted strongly that they should remain a separate order in the nation; that they should retain their old privilege of voting separately in the States-General; that their dignities and honorary distinctions should be maintained. Some of the cahiers even asked that the privileged orders should wear a special dress, and that a separate order of peasants should be constituted, and very many of them protested against the sale of offices which introduced a crowd of lawyers and other functionaries into the nobility.[1]

These views may not have represented everything that extreme reformers could desire, but historians must be very false or very prejudiced if they describe them as the views of a class that was opposed to reform and incapable of discharging a useful function in a free State. It was a remark of Sieyès that in the literature that preceded the Revolution, the most powerful defences of the rights of the commons came from the pens of members of the privileged orders,[2] and it is an incon-

[1] See an excellent analysis of the cahiers of the nobles in Tocqueville, *Ancien Régime*, pp. 387–401.

[2] Chérest, ii. 255–257.

testable fact that a great part of the French aristocracy were at this time thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the eighteenth century, and prepared to make serious sacrifices for the public welfare. The Parliaments had, as I have already shown, in some respects misrepresented their spirit, but the Parliaments had at least been distinguished by two great qualities—a strong dislike to arbitrary power, and a strong desire to introduce a spirit of economy into the State; and in the provincial councils the upper class had of late years shown themselves both liberal and enlightened, and ready to perform a great deal of useful and unobtrusive work.[1] The cahiers of the clergy also showed a frank and general willingness to surrender all privileges in matters of taxation; and wherever the curés preponderated, there was displayed a genuine sympathy with liberal ideas. A better administration of the Church, the opening of all offices to all classes, the establishment of a general system of religious national education, free trade, and constitutional government, were among their leading demands, and some of them expressed a wish that the tools of workmen should never be seized for debt, and that the poorest class should be exempt from taxation.[2]

Among the commons the language was more vague, and while the monarchy was still respected, the ideas of the 'Contrat Social' were very apparent. The electors for the third order asked equality before the civil and criminal law, unity of legislation, liberty of the Press, abolition of all servitude and feudal rights, responsibility

[1] See Lavergne, *Les Assemblées Provinciales*; Taine, *La Révolution*, i. 192, 193. M. Taine says: 'Jamais l'Aristocratie ne fut plus libérale, plus humaine, plus convertie aux réformes utiles; plusieurs resteront tels jusque sous le couteau de la guillotine' (p. 192).

[2] Louis Blanc, *Hist. de la Rév.* ii. 221, 222; Chassin, pp. 253–255; Tocqueville, pp. 165–170.

of ministers, a readjustment of taxation.[1] In this class, however, the desire for equality was still stronger than the desire for reform, and they especially urged that in the States-General the three orders should vote not separately, but together.

If the prevailing wish had been simply to make France a free and constitutional country, in the English or American sense of those terms, the victory was already won. The peremptory instructions of the three orders were of such a nature, that there was no doubt whatever that this end could have been attained with general consent. In April 1789, Gouverneur Morris, whose admirable letters give one of the truest and calmest pictures of the events that ensued, wrote to Washington: 'The elections are finished throughout this kingdom except in the capital, and it appears from the instructions given to the representatives that certain points are universally demanded which, when granted and secured, will render France perfectly free as to the principles of the Constitution. I say the principles, for one generation at least will be required to render the practice familiar.'[2] On the part of the King there was nothing to be feared. Jefferson, one of the most democratic as well as one of the most conspicuous of the leaders of the American Revolution, was at this time in Paris representing the American Republic, and he has left an account of his own experience, which throws a very remarkable light on the secret history of the French Revolution. 'I was much acquainted,' he writes, 'with the leading patriots of the Assembly. Being from a country which had successfully passed through a similar reformation, they were disposed to my acquaintance, and had some confidence in me. I urged most strenu-

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[1] Sismondi, xxi. 296; Grille, *Révolution Française*, i. 135–155.
[2] Morris's *Works*, ii. 67.

ously an immediate compromise to secure what the Government were now ready to yield, and to trust to future occasions for what might still be wanting. It was well understood that the King would grant at this time, first, freedom of the person by Habeas Corpus; second, freedom of conscience; third, freedom of the Press; fourth, trial by jury; fifth, a representative Legislature; sixth, annual meetings; seventh, the origination of laws; eighth, the exclusive right of taxation and appropriation; and ninth, the responsibility of ministers; and with the exercise of these powers they could obtain in future whatever might be further necessary to improve and preserve their Constitution.' 'They thought otherwise, however,' continues Jefferson, 'and events have proved their lamentable error, for after thirty years of war, foreign and domestic, the loss of millions of lives, the prostration of private happiness, and the foreign subjugation of their own country for a time, they have obtained no more, nor even that securely.'[1]

The representatives of the three orders included a few men of real genius, and many who would have risen into prominence in any Legislature. It is remarkable that Mirabeau and the Abbé Sieyès, who were the most conspicuous figures in the third order, had both abandoned their own orders to sit in it. Among the steady advocates of moderate reform in the commons were Mounier, who had been the leading member of the States of Dauphiné, a man of great intellect and historical knowledge, and one of the best political writers in France; Malouet, the experienced and high-minded intendant of Toulon; Tronchet, a veteran lawyer who represented Paris, and who presided over the commission for framing the Constitution. A young and eloquent

[1] Jefferson's *Memoirs*, i. 80.

soldier named Cazalès represented the extreme Royalist party, while violent democratic opinions were supported by the passionate eloquence of Barnave, by the logic of Dupont, by Rabaut de St. Etienne, a Protestant pastor who wrote the history of the Assembly in a strain of the highest enthusiasm, and who, like so many of the enthusiasts of the Revolution, soon ended his days on the guillotine. Another distinguished member of the commons who underwent the same fate was Bailly, member of the French Academy, a distinguished man of science, twice Mayor of Paris, and first President of the National Assembly; and there was a group of darker and more dangerous spirits who were as yet unnoticed and obscure, including Buzot and Pétion, and the young advocate of Arras, Maximilien Robespierre. The clergy had a brilliant but superficial rhetorician in the Abbé Maury; an eminently wise and high-minded statesman in Luzerne, the Bishop of Langres; a political intriguer of deep and subtle ability in Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun. Among the nobles was the Duke of Orleans, whose evil influence may be traced in most of the earlier stages of the Revolution; and there too might be seen Lafayette, still glittering with the aureole of his American reputation; the eloquent and chivalrous Lally Tollendal; the two Lameths, vehement advocates of revolutionary change; D'Esprémênil, who had once enjoyed boundless popularity as he led the opposition to the King in the Parliament of Paris, and who was soon to lose his head as a Royalist. A characteristic feature of the Assembly was the large number of curés among the clergy, and of lawyers among the commons. Of the latter profession there were no less than 374.[1]

Though containing many men of ability and high character, the Assembly was for the most part almost

[1] Carlyle's *Hist. of the French Revolution*, i. 118.

totally destitute both of the education of intellect and of the education of character that fit men for public life, and it was completely intoxicated with the doctrines of Rousseau. There were at this time two excellent observers in Paris who had watched carefully political life in the two countries where it was the most active, and it is remarkable how closely they agreed in their independent estimates of the situation. In the discussions of the States-General, Arthur Young said: 'I find a general ignorance of the principles of government, a strange and unaccountable appeal on one side to ideal and visionary rights of nature, and on the other no settled plan that shall give security to the people for being in future in a much better situation than hitherto.' 'The spectators in the galleries are allowed to interfere in the debates by clapping their hands and by other noisy expressions of approbation. . . . More than once to-day there were one hundred members on their legs at a time, and M. Bailly absolutely without power to keep order.'[1]

Gouverneur Morris compared the new legislators to young scholars fresh from the university, who would bring everything to a Roman standard. They desired, he said, to produce an American constitution without having American citizens to support it. He was struck with the large number of members who had 'much imagination' but 'little knowledge, judgment, or reflection,' with their 'romantic spirit' and their 'romantic ideas of government.' Further experience did not improve his estimate of the Assembly. 'It may be divided,' he wrote in January 1790, 'into three parts, one called the aristocrats . . . another which has no name, but which consists of all sorts of people really friends of good government. The third is composed of what is

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[1] Pinkerton, iv. 170, 174, 175.

called here the *enragés*, that is, the madmen. These are the most numerous, and are of that class which in America is known by the name of pettifogging lawyers, together with a host of curates and many of those persons who in all revolutions throng to the standard of change because they are not well. This last party is in close alliance with the populace here, and derives from that circumstance very great authority.'[1]

It soon appeared that the quarrel between the commons and the two privileged orders could not be averted or even deferred. The vital question was whether the three orders should vote as separate bodies, each possessing a right of veto, or two combined exercising it on the third, or whether, as the commons desired, the three orders should form a single assembly and should vote by head. The question was a very unhappy one, for each alternative led to grave evils. A constitution in which the assent of three distinct legislative assemblies was required for the validity of a law, would be in the highest degree cumbrous and inefficient, and a constitution in which the two privileged orders could always by a coalition outnumber and paralyse the order which represented the bulk of the nation, would be extremely unfavourable to liberty and utterly inconsistent with democratic ideas. On the other hand, the adoption of the other alternative would practically place the whole government of France, without any control, in the hands of a single popular chamber, and such a government is the very worst with which a nation can be cursed. It is a despotism more dangerous, as well as more inefficient for good, than an absolute monarchy; for the sense of responsibility is divided and deadened, and the infamy attaching to unjust actions, to excesses of tyranny, or to usurpations of power is comparatively unfelt when

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[1] Morris's *Works*, ii. 75, 79, 88, 89.

diffused among many instead of being concentrated on one. Besides this, every large assembly partakes of the nature of a mob. It is sure to be swayed by passion, faction, party spirit, personal influence, and rhetorical skill, and in no other form of uncontrolled government is there likely to be so little of the higher qualities of judgment and prescience that are most necessary for the wise and temperate administration of affairs.

These remarks apply to all countries, but there were special evils to be feared in France if the plan of the commons was realised. In the first place, it would manifestly make the democratic element supreme, for the number of the commons was equal to that of the two other orders combined, and a considerable proportion of the nobles and a still larger proportion of the clergy were certain to join them. In the next place, it would put the direction of affairs, without any controlling, revising, or modifying senate, in the hands of an assembly which was totally without experience; and in the last place, that assembly would consist of twelve hundred members. It may be boldly asserted that there never was a legislative assembly which from its circumstances and its composition was less fitted to legislate without a second chamber than that which now assembled in France; and it may also be truly said that even in the most phlegmatic nation, and in the nation most accustomed to parliamentary usages, a parliament of twelve hundred members would become totally unmanageable.

If the difficulty had arisen either in England or America, it would almost certainly have been met by the obvious compromise of dividing the orders into two chambers. Necker desired this, but in accordance with his usual timid policy he refrained from bringing it forward, and contented himself with trying very ineffectually to induce the contending parties to adjourn the

question till after the verification of powers. A small party, headed by Luzerne, the Bishop of Langres, argued in favour of a bicameral division, and the project was strongly supported by Malouet, Mounier, and Lally Tollendal. It was soon, however, found to be extremely unpopular, and when at a somewhat later period it was formally brought before the National Assembly, it was rejected by a majority of more than ten to one. It is remarkable that the aristocratic section of the Assembly joined with the democratic section in opposing it. If the bicameral system had been adopted, the upper chamber would have consisted of the bishops and of the one hundred or one hundred and fifty families of the ancient nobility of France. The curés and the new nobility of the robe would have sat in the lower chamber, and accordingly these classes, who formed the greater part of the two privileged orders, at once repudiated the project. On the other hand, the democratic party violently resisted it as an imitation of the aristocratic government of England; as consecrating and strengthening hereditary distinctions; as introducing into the Legislature a division of powers which was directly opposed to the principles of Rousseau. 'The very nature of things,' it was said, 'resists this division of the legislative authority. The nation is one, so should then be the body that represents it.'[1]

The result of all this was that when the States-General, on which the hopes of France were so passionately fixed, met, this Assembly found itself at the very outset of its proceedings completely paralysed, and a revolution in its constitution became inevitable. The first business to be accomplished was the verification of the election of the members. In the opinion of some

[1] A very good account of the discussions on these questions will be found in Smyth's *French Revolution*, lec. xvii.

politicians, this verification should have taken place before the King in council; but he left it, perhaps unwisely, to the Assembly, and it at once produced a a dispute between the orders.

The Third Estate, assuming a position of superiority and ascendency, now invited the other orders to come to them for the purpose of verifying their powers conjointly. The invitation was refused, and from May 5 till the middle of June no public business was accomplished. At last, however, on the proposal of Sieyès and amid a storm of frantic excitement, the Third Estate alone voted themselves 'the National Assembly,' invited the other two orders to join them, and, pushing their pretensions to sovereignty to the highest point, declared that the existing taxes, not having been consented to by the nation, were all illegal. The National Assembly, however, allowed them to be levied till its separation, after which they were to cease if not formally regranted.

This great revolution was effected on June 17, and it at once placed the Third Order in a totally new relation both to the other orders and to the Crown. There were speedy signs of yielding among some members of the privileged orders, and a fierce wave of excitement supported the change. Malouet strongly urged that the proper course was to dissolve the Assembly and to appeal to the constituencies, but Necker declined, and a feeble and ineffectual effort of the King to accomplish a reunion, and at the same time to overawe the Third Order, precipitated the Revolution. The King announced his intention of holding a royal session on June 22, and he summoned the three orders to meet him. It was his design to direct them to unite in order to deliberate in common on matters of common interest, and to regain the royal initiative by laying down the lines of a new constitution. He hoped to

effect a bicameral arrangement, and he determined also to recommend an abolition of all privileges in matters of taxation, and the admissibility of all citizens to civil and military employments.

On Saturday, the 20th, however, the course of events was interrupted by the famous scene in the tennis court. Troops had lately been pouring to an alarming extent into Paris, and exciting much suspicion in the popular party, and the Government very injudiciously selected for the royal session on the following Monday the hall in which the Third Order assembled. The hall was being prepared for the occasion, and therefore no meeting could be held. The members, ignorant of the fact, went to their chamber and were repelled by soldiers Furious at the insult, they adjourned to the neighbouring tennis court. A suspicion that the King meant to dissolve them was abroad, and they resolved to resist such an attempt. With lifted hands and in a transport of genuine, if somewhat theatrical, enthusiasm, they swore that they would never separate 'till the constitution of the kingdom and the regeneration of public order were established on a solid basis.' The oath was proposed by no less a man than Mounier, and Bailly claimed his privilege as president to be the first to take it. One single member, Martin d'Auche, refused his assent.

The Third Estate had thus virtually assumed the sole legislative authority in France, and, like the Long Parliament in England, had denied the King's power to dissolve them. The public excitement had reached fever point, and in the council of the King there were grave divisions. A powerful section accused Necker of ruining the cause of the King and of the privileged orders, and there was a widely spread impression that he did not possess the qualities of command and decision needed for the occasion. This impression was

probably a just one, but it is not clear that the King had any servant who was more fit to meet the emergency; and the difficulties of a minister with a divided council, and in a moment of revolution, are always greater than either contemporary opinion or historical judgments are inclined to recognise. Owing to the dissension that had arisen, the royal session was postponed till the 23rd, but on the preceding day the National Assembly met in a church, and its session was a very important one, for on this occasion a great body of the clergy formally joined it. One hundred and forty-eight members of the clergy, of whom one hundred and thirty-four were curés, had now given their adhesion. Two of the nobles, separating from their colleagues, took the same course.[1]

Next day the royal session was held. The project adopted in the council differed so much from that of Necker, that this minister refused to give it the sanction of his presence. Instead of commanding the three orders to deliberate together in the common interest, it was determined in the revised project that the King should merely invite them to do so. The King, in the scheme of Necker, while reserving to himself the right of sanctioning or rejecting any changes in the constitution of future States-General, left the examination of the faults in the existing constitution of the States-General to the Assembly of the Three Orders, with a declaration that he would refuse his consent to any legislative organisation which was not composed of at least two chambers. It was now, however, determined to withdraw altogether from the common deliberation 'the form of the constitution to be given to the coming States-General,' and to recognise fully the essential distinction of the three orders as political bodies, though

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[1] Louis Blanc, ii. 301.

they might, with the approval of the Sovereign, deliberate in common. Necker had proposed, too, that the King should decisively, and of his own authority, abolish all privileges of taxation, but in the amended article the King only undertook to give his sanction to this measure on condition of the two orders renouncing their privileges.[1] On the other hand, the King announced to the Assembly a long series of articles of reform which would have made France a thoroughly constitutional country, and have swept away nearly all the great abuses in its government. They gave the States-General complete control of the purse, abolished absolutely letters of 'cachet,' the taille and the corvée, established liberty of the press and very complete local self-government, and, in a word, reformed almost the whole administration of France. He recommended these reforms to the three orders, but declared that if they unfortunately could not agree to effect them, he would endeavour to carry them out himself.

I have already quoted the remarkable passage in which Jefferson has recorded his judgment of the proposed constitution. At the same time, while divesting himself for the future of some of the most important of his prerogatives, the King endeavoured to secure and assert for himself that share of power which rightly belongs to a constitutional sovereign. He annulled the proceedings of June 17, by which the Third Estate alone declared itself the Legislature of France. He reminded the Assembly that none of its proceedings could acquire the force of law without his assent, and he asserted his sole right as French Sovereign to the command of the army and police. He concluded by directing the three orders to withdraw and to meet next day to consider his proposals.

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[1] *Œuvres de Necker*, ix. 182–188.

The King, with the nobles and the majority of the clergy, at once withdrew, but the Third Order defiantly remained. It was evident that the attempt to conciliate and the attempt to assert the royal authority had both failed. The Assembly proclaimed itself inviolable. It confirmed the decrees which the King had annulled. Sieyès declared, in words which excited a transport of enthusiasm, that what the Assembly was yesterday it still was to-day; and two days later, the triumph of the Assembly became still more evident by the adhesion of forty-seven of the nobility. After this defection the King saw the hopelessness of resistance, and on the 27th he ordered the remainder of the nobles to take the same course.

It was becoming evident that force alone must decide the issue, and it was also daily becoming more evident on which side that force lay. Arthur Young, it is true, believed that almost to the moment of the catastrophe, vigour and ability might have turned everything to the side of the Court; that not only the majority of the nobles, the higher clergy, and the Parliaments, but also the soldiers would have been with the King; and that a resolute and military ruler might still have triumphed.[1] But the feeble, amiable, and most pacific Sovereign whom an unhappy fate had placed on the throne in this great crisis of French history, had none of the qualities that were needed to rally the forces of the Crown; and day by day the defection of the troops became more apparent. 'The ferment at

[1] Pinkerton, iv. 184. Even a year later Malouet believed this to be true. 'Le Roi,' he says, 'ne pouvait se résoudre à tirer l'épée contre ses sujets. Je m'arrête à regret sur les fautes de ce prince infortuné, qui méritait par la bonté de son cœur une autre destinée; il y a tel capitaine de grenadiers, qui l'eût sauvé, lui et l'Etat, s'il l'avait laissé faire.'—*Mém. de Malouet*, i. 305, 306.

Paris,' writes Young on June 24, 'is beyond conception; 10,000 people have been all this day in the Palais Royal. . . . The King's propositions are received with universal disgust. . . . The people seem with a sort of frenzy to reject all idea of compromise. . . . The constant meetings at the Palais Royal, which are carried to a degree of licentiousness and fury of liberty that is scarcely credible, united with the innumerable inflammatory publications that have been hourly appearing since the assembly of the States, have so heated the people's expectations, and given them the idea of such total changes, that nothing the King or Court could do would now satisfy them.'[1]

In the mean time the real rulers of the country were coming rapidly to the surface. All nations are in truth governed by aristocracies, but these aristocracies vary greatly in their character. The 'Club Breton,' which soon became the 'Club des Jacobins,' was already formed; and an aristocracy, half criminal, half fanatic, consisting of groups of local agitators and of the scum of the Paris mob, began to overawe the representatives of the nation, and to direct the course of its policy. Troops were poured into Paris, but their presence was an excitement without being a protection, for day after day it became more evident that their discipline was gone, and that they shared the sympathies and the passions of the mob. They had caught the contagion of the time, and the revolutionary party had two most powerful instruments for acting upon them. They promised to throw open all ranks to the private, and they also, in accordance with the instructions of many of the cahiers, promised an increase of pay. At the same time famine grew daily more intense, and the mobs more passionate and more formidable. The dismissal of Necker on the

[1] Pinkerton, iv. 180, 181.

evening of July 11 was the spark which produced the conflagration that had long been preparing. Next day Paris flew to arms. The troops with few exceptions abandoned the King; and when, with scarcely any serious resistance, the Bastille was captured on the 14th, and the head of its murdered governor carried by a triumphant procession through the streets, the Revolution may be said to have definitely triumphed. Power had now passed both from the King and from the Assembly into the hands of the mob. As was truly said, it was not a revolt, but a revolution; not a change of government, but a dissolution of all government; and France began that terrible career of anarchy which was only completely terminated by the wars and the despotism of Napoleon. For the next few years she lay among the great Powers of Europe a portent and a wonder; cut away from all her ancient moorings, drifting without a compass or a helmsman, like some exploding fireship, scattering terror and desolation along her path.

There has been in the present generation a strong reaction against the old habit of treating history merely as a series of biographical studies, and military incidents and pictures, and it has become the special delight of historians to trace through a remote past the causes that have prepared and produced great changes. It is possible, however, for this mode of writing history to be carried too far, and it has produced a school of historic fatalists who appear to me to have greatly underrated the part which accident, political wisdom, and political folly have borne in human affairs. To me at least it appears, from the facts that have been related in this chapter, that the French Revolution, though undoubtedly prepared by causes which had been in operation for centuries, might, till within a very few years of

the catastrophe, have been with no great difficulty averted. A profound change in the character of the government and institutions of France had indeed become inevitable, but such a change need not have been a revolution, and if it had been effected, as very similar changes have been effected in other countries, without the subversion of the monarchy and a total disorganisation of the State, its influence both on French and on European history would have been wholly different. In spite of the wars and debts of Lewis XIV., in spite of the vices and incapacity of the Regency and of Lewis XV., in spite of much class selfishness and a great subversion of ancient opinions, the position of the French monarchy on the accession of Lewis XVI. was far from desperate. If a Henry IV. or a Frederick the Great had then mounted the throne, or if Lewis XVI. had found for his Minister a Richelieu or a Pitt, a Cavour or a Bismarck, France would never have drifted into anarchy.

The chief faults that made the situation irremediable may, I think, be easily traced. The policy of Lewis XV. towards his Parliaments was of the kind which beyond all others discredits and weakens governments. Either resistance or concession if consistently and skilfully conducted might have succeeded, but a policy of alternate resistance and concession, of bold acts of authority repeatedly and ignominiously reversed, could have no other effect than to uproot all feeling of reverence for the Crown. The same weak and fluctuating policy was pursued under much more critical circumstances by Lewis XVI. The restoration of the Parliaments by that Sovereign appears to me to have been a capital mistake. It raised up without necessity an opposition to the Crown of the most dangerous and embarrassing description; and it at the same time enormously increased the difficulty of accomplishing the equalisation

of taxation and the commutation of the feudal system, which were the two measures most absolutely necessary if a revolution was to be averted. If at the beginning of his reign, when his power was still uncontested and when his popularity was its height, the King, instead of restoring the Parliaments, had summoned the States-General to carry these measures, or if without summoning the States-General he had decreed them by his own royal authority, he would probably have succeeded. But the propitious moment was suffered to pass. A false step was taken which produced endless embarrassments, and the great fault of the American war soon followed. This war for the first time made French finances irremediable. It inoculated French public opinion with republican ideas, and it produced that fatal disorganisation of the army which was still further aggravated by the decree of 1781, making the higher ranks a strict monopoly of the nobles. The extravagance of Calonne and the incapacity of Brienne continued the work of ruin, and although Lewis XVI. and Necker were, on the whole greatly superior to the average of French kings and ministers, they proved totally destitute of the qualities that were most needed in the crisis of a revolution. In this way the foundations of authority were completely sapped. Concessions which at an earlier period would have been welcomed with enthusiasm, only whetted the appetite for change. A great famine occurring at a time of great political excitement immensely strengthened the elements of disorder. The edifice of government tottered and fell, and all Europe resounded with its fall.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the remarkable letter written in 1753, in which Lord Chesterfield described the signs of revolution which he saw already gathering in France, he added, 'I am glad of it; the rest of Europe will be quieter and have time to recover.' The judgment expressed in this passage was very generally shared by English statesmen when the French Revolution actually began. It was believed that for a long period the influence of France would be withdrawn from European politics, and that this withdrawal was certain to be very favourable to the interests both of England and of peace. With the exception of a few years that followed the accession of the House of Hanover, when dynastic and Hanoverian interests conspired to bring the English Government into close connection with the Government of France, the whole course of foreign policy since the Revolution of 1688 had been one continued contest against French power and ambition. From 1689 to the Peace of Ryswick in 1697, and from 1702 to the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, England had been engaged in a desperate struggle against Lewis XIV. The war which broke out in 1739 was, it is true, originally a Spanish war, produced by a Spanish trade quarrel, but it was soon merged in the French war of the Austrian Succession, and the original object was so completely forgotten that it was not even mentioned in the Peace of Aix la Chapelle. The Seven Years' War, which terminated in the glorious peace of 1763, was directed against French influence in Germany; and the

American quarrel only became really formidable when France threw her sword into the scale and involved England in a great European and Asiatic struggle.

From these facts it was inferred that England was likely to benefit by the temporary eclipse of her rival; and many things had happened since France had entered into the cone of revolution which appeared to justify the prediction. In the autumn of 1787 her financial and other internal embarrassments secured the success of the Prussian invasion of Holland, and enabled England and Prussia to overthrow the French ascendency in that country. In the summer of 1788 three ambassadors from Tippoo Sahib arrived in Paris, offering the French great commercial privileges if they would support that chief against the English, as they had supported his father, Hyder Ali, and would send 3,000 men to his assistance. The ambassadors were received with great demonstrations of popular enthusiasm, but the condition of France was so critical that the Government did not venture to assist them, and England was enabled to carry her Indian war to a triumphant issue.[1] In 1790, the threatened war between England and Spain on account of Nootka Sound was only averted because France was unable to support her ally; and during the whole of the Eastern war, which affected so deeply the interests and the relative power of Russia, Turkey, Austria, Sweden and Prussia, France, contrary to all previous example, remained almost absolutely passive.[2] As we have already seen, the English Government rejected the Prussian project of interference with the revolt in the Austrian Netherlands, on the ground that there was no serious danger of those provinces

[1] See *Mém. de Malouet*, i. 206.

[2] On July 28, 1789, Ewart wrote: 'This Court [Prussia] is persuaded that the great popular revolution in France will prevent that country effectually from interfering in any shape in favour of the Imperial Court.'

passing under the influence or dominion of France, as recent events must have diverted the Flemish *noblesse* and clergy from the French system, and as 'the present apparent and increasing weakness and distraction of that country must prevent any body of men from looking to that quarter for any present and effectual support.'[1]

Hostility to France, and especially to the House of Bourbon, had from the first formation of the great English parties been a characteristic sentiment of the Whigs. The subservience of the later Stuarts to French influence had been one of the great grounds for grievance against them; and the Revolution of 1688 had made France more than ever a natural enemy. It was said that a French king had once asked the Abbé Gaultier the difference between a Whig and a Tory, and the Abbé had answered, that the Tories were the French King's only friends in England, and that the Whigs were all his enemies, 'with this circumstance, that it is possible the Tories may become your enemies, but impossible the Whigs can become your friends.'[2] After the peace of 1763, it had indeed been noticed that there had been a considerable tendency to approximation between the two nations. A writer in 1767 observed that 'more French of distinction had visited England since the last war than at any other period since the English lost their great possessions in that country,' and he added that the friendly communication of knowledge between the

[1] Leeds to Ewart, Feb. 26, 1790.

[2] Toland's *State Anatomy of England*. As a Radical writer says, 'The Whigs of that day always beheld France with an invidious eye, and rejoiced at her humiliation and disgrace. Considering the example of successful tyranny as contagious, they vowed eternal enmity and everlasting hatred against a king who kept more than twenty-five millions of his subjects in slavery; and they would willingly have waged perpetual war with a nation base and abject enough to hug their chains.'—Stephens' *Life of Horne Tooke*, i. 56.

learned of all countries, even in time of war, was 'a distinction peculiar to the present age.'[1] The influence of English thought upon French literature was one of the most remarkable facts of the eighteenth century; and although French literary influence was much less apparent in England, the splendid scientific discoveries of Frenchmen were eagerly welcomed. But it may be doubted whether the popular feeling was really changed, and Pitt had seldom shown more political courage than when he introduced his commercial treaty with France, and maintained that the two great nations which confronted each other across the Channel were intended by Nature to be friends and not enemies. We have already seen with what vehemence Fox repudiated the assertion, declaring that France and England were and always must be natural enemies.

Before the capture of the Bastille, the events that were taking place in France appear to have excited only a rare and languid interest in England. Parliamentary government carried on by party conflicts has many merits, but it greatly narrows the horizon of political knowledge and interests; for the constant succession of domestic questions which it produces is quite sufficient to absorb the amount of time and attention that ordinary men can devote to public affairs. The King's illness, and the Regency question that grew out of it, fully engrossed the popular mind, and what little interest was felt in foreign affairs had of late been directed much more to St. Petersburg than to Paris. The only question relating to France which at this time came before the public was an application from the French Government, in the spring of 1789, for permission to export 20,000

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[1] *Ann. Reg.* 1787, p. 4. Horace Walpole also notices that great numbers of French travellers visited England, and some even Ireland, after the peace. *Mem. of Geo. III.* iii. 107. See, too, his letter to Mann, April 30, 1763.

sacks of flour from England to the northern provinces of France, which were suffering severely from famine. As the price of corn in England was higher than that at which the exportation was allowed by law, the French request could not be granted without the sanction of Parliament. The request was referred to a committee, and apparently carefully considered on its merits, and it was finally decided that, in consequence of the very high price of corn in England and the very bad prospects of the coming harvest, it could not be safely granted.[1]

The capture of the Bastille, however, was so startling and so dramatic, that it at once excited in England a strong and general interest, which the events that followed were well fitted to stimulate. The creation of a great national army independent of the Crown; the virtual assumption of absolute power by a representative body, which had transformed its own constitution, placed itself above the instructions of its constituents, and denied the King the right of dissolving it; the strange triumphal procession of July 17, when the King was carried almost a captive to the Hôtel de Ville and compelled to assume the national cockade; the blazing country houses and the innumerable scenes of pillage and murder that accompanied the insurrection of the country people against their feudal lords; the abolition on August 4 of the whole feudal system, and of nearly all the privileges of classes, provinces, and towns; the decree which ordered all tithes to be commuted for money, followed within a few days by the decree which abolished them without compensation; and finally, the promulgation of a Declaration of Rights of the most abstract and far-reaching character—all indicated the complete transformation of the Government of France. The most splendid and ancient monarchy of Europe was virtually overthrown. The Assembly rejected by great

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 226-230. Wilberforce's *Life*, i. 226-228.

majorities all proposals to share its power with a second chamber, and it denied the King not only his ancient right of initiating laws and of dissolving the Assembly, but also the right of imposing more than a temporary veto on its proceedings.

Then came the horrible days of October 5 and 6, when Versailles was invaded by a furious and famished mob, when the Queen only saved her life by flying half-naked from her room, when the sentinels and several gentlemen of the Court were cut down and murdered in the palace, and when at last, after marvellous escapes, the Royal Family were conducted as prisoners to Paris by the mob. The journey lasted for six hours, and in the course of it muskets were more than once levelled at the royal carriage. In front were borne, transfixed upon pikes, the heads of two gentlemen of the Court. The disarmed and captive bodyguard were led one by one. Around the carriage of the Royal Family the mob danced, and sang and shouted, 'All bishops to the lamp-post.' On the arrival of the procession in Paris, it was met by Bailly the mayor, who described the scene as 'a beautiful day,' while in the Assembly Mirabeau declared that the vessel of State, instead of being retarded by it, would only advance the more rapidly towards regeneration, and Barnave replied to those who spoke with horror of the murders, by asking whether the blood that was shed was indeed so pure. From this time the King of France was a helpless prisoner in the Tuileries, with scarcely any voice or power in the government of France.

All these events soon had their influence in England. The many small democratic societies which had arisen during the Wilkes troubles and during the American war, and which had of late been almost dormant, began to stir again. There were men of the school of Cartwright and Jebb, who had long been advocating,

amid general neglect, parliamentary reform on grounds of *à priori* right, and who now, to their own astonishment, found their principles triumphant in the foremost nation of the Continent. There were political Dissenters who detested the Church Establishment, and especially the system of tithes, and who saw with unspeakable delight the total abolition of that system in France. The principles enunciated in the Declaration of Rights were of the broadest and most sweeping character, applicable to all nations, and well fitted to fascinate unguided, half-educated, and adventurous enthusiasts; and it was not unpleasing to the many local busybodies, who might be found in every great town, putting themselves forward as representatives of the people and trying to force themselves into political notoriety, to find that men who were very much of their own class and intellectual calibre were practically directing the Government of France. The unsuccessful efforts of the Dissenters in 1787, 1789, and 1790 to obtain a repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts had given a new energy and union to their political forces, and the very fact that the events in France were already beginning to throw great masses of men into violent and unreasonable opposition to all change gave a corresponding impulse to the opposite party.

A few men of station and ability belonged to it. Priestley was a really great man of science, and though his works on other subjects have little value, the amazing fertility and facility of his pen had made him very prominent, and he was a bitter enemy of the Established Church. His enthusiasm for the Revolution was from the first unbounded. 'There is indeed,' he wrote in October, 'a glorious prospect for mankind before us. Flanders seems to be quite ripe for a similar revolution; and other countries, I hope, will follow in due time; and when civil tyranny is all at an end, that of the

Church will soon be disposed of. . . . Our Court and courtiers will not like these things; and the bishops least of all.'[1] 'I do not wonder,' he wrote a little later, 'at the hatred and dread of this spirit of revolution in kings and courtiers. Their power is generally usurpation, and I hope the time is approaching when an end will be put to all usurpation in things civil or religious, first in Europe and then in other countries.'[2] Dr. Price, who had a still greater weight with the Nonconformists, and who had obtained a considerable political importance on account of the part he had taken in the American contest, and on account of the popularity of his financial schemes, was passionately on the side of the Revolution, and a small section of the aristocracy had also adopted extreme principles of democratic reform. Only a few years had passed since the Duke of Richmond had harangued the House of Lords in favour of universal suffrage, equal electoral districts, and annual Parliaments. Lord Stanhope's political opinions fell little, if at all, short of republicanism, and there was a strong tinge of something very like republicanism in no less a person than Lord Lansdowne.[3] In 1793 Burke wrote to the Duke of Portland: 'It is truly alarming to see so large a part of the aristocratic interest engaged in the cause of the new species of democracy.'[4] A few years later, on the occasion of Fox's birthday, it was the Duke of Norfolk, the head of the English aristocracy, who proposed as a toast 'The health of our Sovereign—the Majesty of the People.'

On November 9, 1789, a not very important body of advanced politicians, called 'A Society for Commemo-

[1] Rutt's *Life of Priestley*, ii. 38.

[2] Ibid. p. 81.

[3] See his very curious letter to Morellet about the Revolution, in Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, iii. 488–498.

[4] Letter to the Duke of Portland, accompanying the 'Observations on the Conduct of the Minority.' Burke's *Works*, vii. 220.

rating the Revolution in Great Britain,' or more shortly, 'The Revolution Society,' met under the presidency of Lord Stanhope at the London Tavern, and drew up an address of congratulation to the National Assembly, expressing a hope that 'the glorious example given in France' might 'encourage other nations to assert the inalienable rights of mankind, and thereby introduce a general reformation into the Governments of Europe.' It was on this occasion that Dr. Price preached before the Society the famous sermon which Burke afterwards made the text of his 'Reflections on the French Revolution.' It was an enthusiastic eulogy of all that had taken place in France. The preacher declared himself ready to repeat the 'Nunc Dimittis' of Simeon, as he had lived to see thirty millions of men spurning slavery; 'their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects,' and he predicted that the example of France would soon destroy the dominion both of kings and of priests, and would sweep away all despotism from Europe.

These proceedings gradually excited a large share of public attention. The National Assembly of France at once responded by a warm vote of thanks, and directed the Archbishop of Aix, who then presided over it, to write in its name to Lord Stanhope, and in almost every considerable town in France patriotic societies took the same course. The Revolution Society, which hitherto had been very little known in England, found itself suddenly invested with an extraordinary importance, and treated as the special and accredited representative of the English people. It printed a large volume of its correspondence with different societies in France; and other democratic societies, following its instigation or its example, began to spring up in the great towns, to pass resolutions expressing admiration of the French Revolution, and to send complimentary

addresses to Paris. 'The Press,' wrote one of the principal chroniclers of the time, 'teemed with the most daring libels upon the Constitution of this country, and all its constituent parts. They were distributed gratis, and circulated with astonishing industry not only amongst the lower class of the community, but through the army and the navy. In these writings, the people were invited to form themselves into clubs and societies after the manner of the French; and many were actually formed in a great number of the most populous towns of the kingdom, avowedly affiliated (to use an expression of their own) by the democratic clubs in France.'[1] The sermon of Price was published, widely distributed, and translated into French. Priestley declared that it 'moved him to tears,' and he predicted that it would have as great an effect as the work on 'Civil Liberty,' by which the same writer had so powerfully stirred public opinion during the American war. The Revolution Society resolved to celebrate the anniversaries of the capture of the Bastille, and at the first anniversary Price made a speech which was much remarked. 'Oh, heavenly philanthropists,' he exclaimed, apostrophising the Revolutionists in France, 'well do you deserve the admiration not only of your own country, but of all countries! You have already determined to renounce for ever all views of conquest and all offensive wars. . This is an instance of wisdom and attention to human rights which has no example. But you will do more: you will invite Great Britain to join you in this determination, and to enter into a compact with you for promoting peace on earth, good will among men. . . . Thus united, the two kingdoms will be omnipotent. They will soon draw into their confederation Holland and other countries on this side of

[1] *Annual Register*, 1790, p. 65.

the globe, and the United States of America on the other.'[1]

We have already seen that in the debate on the Unitarian disabilities Burke had brought the proceedings of the Revolution Society prominently before Parliament; but as long as they were confined to mere irresponsible politicians they did not appear deserving of much serious attention. In no respect is the sagacity of a true statesman more needed or more displayed than in distinguishing between the strong, permanent, and for the most part silent currents of national opinion, and the noisy and frothy imitations which small knots of agitators can always produce. As far as can be now judged, the danger of England being seriously affected by the contagion of French example was as yet very small. It was true, indeed, that the British Constitution in nearly all its parts was hopelessly corrupt if measured by the canons of Rousseau; but the philosophy of Rousseau was not adapted to the English mind, and the conditions of England were in nearly every respect the extreme opposite of those of France. The unpopularity of the King, which had been very great during the ministry of Bute and during part of the American war, had wholly passed away, and his recent illness had raised the spirit of loyalty to the highest point. The administration of public affairs, which in France had been of late conducted with astonishing weakness and astonishing vacillation, was in England in the hands of a popular, brilliant, and most successful statesman; and there is no reason to believe

[1] Rutt's *Life of Priestley*, ii. 79, 80. See, too, Morgan's *Life of Price*, pp. 161–163; and a volume (printed, I believe, privately) called *The Correspondence of the Revolution Society in London with the National Assembly, and with various Societies of the Friends of Liberty in France and England.* (London, 1792.)

that any possible change in the suffrage would have overthrown or even seriously weakened his power. The approach of bankruptcy was one main cause of the Revolution in France, but the ministry of Pitt had in no respect been more distinguished than for the singular skill with which he had managed the national finances. There was in England no genuine republicanism, no exemption of the rich from taxation, no antagonism between the law courts and the Government. There were very few feudal rights which were seriously oppressive, and although there was a great aristocracy and an established Church, with many privileges, anomalies, and abuses, there was little or nothing of that profound separation of classes which made the social condition of France so dangerous.

Nor were the intellectual influences in the two countries at all similar. English literature, over which Dr. Johnson at this time exercised an extraordinary influence, presented a strange contrast in its orthodox and conservative tone to the great antichristian literature which was animated by the spirit of Voltaire; and the political philosophy of Hume, Burke, and Adam Smith was as far as possible removed from the philosophy of Rousseau. The highly conservative Whiggism of Burke and the highly liberalised Toryism of Pitt seemed equally safe, and among the middle and lower classes the Methodist and Evangelical movement was now at its height, and was drawing the strongest enthusiasm in directions wholly remote from politics and from French ideas. In England, it is true, as in France, there was at this time a series of bad harvests which produced much distress and much political discontent; but distress in England fell far short of famine. The general level of well-being was very high, and the recent developments in manufacturing industry had opened out great fields of employment and prosperity.

When we add to this the insular and unspeculative habits of the English mind, the large measure of political experience that pervaded all classes, and the strong English distrust for everything French, it appeared very improbable that the French Revolution should have a dangerous influence in England. The Bastille had no doubt gathered around it so many enormously exaggerated associations of oppression and cruelty[1] that its destruction produced much genuine enthusiasm. Cowper as early as 1785 had predicted the exultation which its downfall would produce;[2] Dr. Darwin praised French insurrection in rapturous strains, and the early enthusiasm of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey represented a feeling which was widely spread, but there was a deep chasm between such a feeling and any wish or design to subvert the ancient Constitution of England.

Much, however, depended on the wisdom and discretion of the party leaders, and while Pitt, at first at least, maintained a studied reticence, the French Revolution soon led to a complete schism among the Whigs.

We are fortunately able, from private letters which are preserved, to trace from the very beginning the impression which the events in Paris made both on Fox and Burke. A curious note is extant, written by Fox a few days after the arrival of the news of the capture of the Bastille, to Fitzpatrick, who was about to go to Paris. Referring apparently to the recent capture, Fox writes: 'How much the greatest event it is that ever

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[1] When the Bastille was taken, it was found to contain only seven prisoners, four of whom were accused of forgery; one was an idiot, and one was detained at the request of his family. Taine, *Ancien Régime*, p. 397. According to the registers which were published in 1789, 300 persons had been confined in this prison in the space of three centuries. Mallet du Pan, *Mercure Britannique*, iii. 213.

[2] *The Task*, book v.

happened in the world! and how much the best!' He sends his warm compliments to the Duke of Orleans, who was in violent opposition to the Court, and concludes: 'Tell him and Lauzun that all my prepossessions against French connections for this country will be at an end, and indeed most part of my European system of politics will be altered, if this Revolution has the consequences that I expect.'[1]

A few days after this letter, Burke wrote to Lord Charlemont: 'Our thoughts of everything at home are suspended by our astonishment at the wonderful spectacle which is exhibited in a neighbouring and rival country. What spectators and what actors! England gazing with astonishment at a French struggle for liberty, and not knowing whether to blame or applaud. The thing, indeed, though I thought I saw something like it in progress for several years, has still somewhat in it paradoxical and mysterious. The spirit it is impossible not to admire; but the old Parisian ferocity has broken out in a shocking manner. It is true that this may be no more than a sudden explosion; if so, no indication can be taken from it; but if it should be character rather than accident, then that people are not fit for liberty, and must have a strong hand like that of their former masters to coerce them. Men must have a certain fund of natural moderation to qualify them for freedom, else it becomes noxious to themselves and a perfect nuisance to everybody else. What will be the event it is hard, I think, still to say.'[2]

The doubts that were expressed in this characteristic letter deepened rapidly in the mind of Burke. He had long paid much attention to the affairs of France and had several correspondents in that country, and to one

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 361. This was written July 30, 1789.

[2] Prior's *Life of Burke* (2nd ed.), ii. 41, 42.

of them towards the end of September he expressed his antipathy to the Revolution in no ambiguous terms. The freedom at which the French were aiming, he maintained, was a spurious freedom. True freedom is 'that state of things in which the liberty of no man and no body of men is in a condition to trespass on the liberty of any person or any description of persons in society.' 'When I shall learn that in France the citizen, by whatever description he is qualified, is in a perfect state of legal security with regard to his life, to his property, to the uncontrolled disposal of his person, to the free use of his industry and his faculties; that he is protected in the beneficial enjoyment of the estates to which, by the course of settled law, he was born, or is provided with a fair compensation for them; that he is maintained in the full fruition of the advantages belonging to the state and condition of life in which he had lawfully engaged himself, or is supplied with an equitable equivalent; when I am assured that a simple citizen may decently express his sentiments upon public affairs without hazard to his life or liberty, even though against a predominant and fashionable opinion; when I know all this of France, I shall be as well pleased as anyone must be who has not forgot the general communion of mankind . . . in local and accidental sympathies.'

It was evident, however, to him that France was advancing to no such ideal. He predicted that 'the same ferocious delight in murder and the same savage cruelty' which had been already displayed would appear again, and he ridiculed the importance that was attached in France to the capture of the Bastille. 'As a prison it was of little importance. Give despotism, and the prisons of despotism will not be wanting, any more than lamp irons will be wanting to democratic fury.' In his judgment the new system in France was 'a most bungling and unworkmanlike performance,' and the members

of the National Assembly had constructed little, though they had destroyed much, and among other things, 'completely broken up their country as a State.' The 'Contrat Social' he considered the work of an eloquent madman, 'a performance of little or no merit.' 'Little did I conceive,' he said, 'that it could ever make revolutions and give law to nations. But so it is. I see some people here are willing that we should become their scholars too, and reform our State on the French model.'[1]

Considering the vehement characters of the two men, it was scarcely likely that these grave differences should be suppressed in public, and the first provocation was given by Fox. In a speech on the army estimates on February 5, 1790, he argued in favour of a reduction of the army, partly on the ground that the new form of government which had arisen in France was likely to make her a better neighbour than she had been, and one passage of his speech was universally understood as a eulogy of the conduct of the French army in taking part, during the insurrection, with the people against the Crown. 'If there ever could be a period,' he said, 'in which he should be less jealous of an increase of the army from any danger to be apprehended to the Constitution, the present was that precise period. The example of a neighbouring nation had proved that former imputations on armies were unfounded calumnies, and it was now universally known throughout all Europe that a man by becoming a soldier did not cease to be a citizen.'[2]

It would be difficult for a responsible statesman to speak more mischievously, and, as a member who was an officer in the army justly remarked, Fox would have found a much more substantial ground for panegyric

[1] Prior's *Burke*, ii. 43–50. [2] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 330.

in the conduct of the English army when the Gordon riots in 1780 had threatened for a time to reduce London to ruin. Little more was said on this occasion, but on the 9th the debate was resumed, and it took more formidable proportions. Pitt again dwelt on the necessity of keeping up the army at its present level, and he alluded to the French question in terms which were both generous and discreet. France, he said, was now passing through a period of convulsion and of trial, and was temporarily wrecked, but sooner or later the crisis must terminate in regular order. The period seemed to him distant, but if the result, as he hoped, was the establishment of that freedom which results from order and good government, France would at once become one of the most brilliant Powers in Europe. She would become more formidable than she ever had been, but also, he hoped, less obnoxious as a neighbour, and for his part he refused to 'regard with envious eyes an approximation in neighbouring States to those sentiments which were the characteristic features of every British subject.'

Burke then arose and made a most elaborate speech. He spoke ostensibly on the side of Fox and in opposition to Pitt, for he argued in favour of a reduction of the military expenditure, but the main portion of his speech was devoted to a consideration of the events that had taken place in France. A large army in England he thought unnecessary, for he could not find that England was in the smallest danger from any State in Europe. 'France had hitherto been our first object in all considerations concerning the balance of power. The presence or absence of France totally varied every sort of speculation relative to that balance. France is at this time in a political light to be considered as expunged out of the system of Europe. Whether she could ever appear in it again as a leading Power was

not easy to determine; but at present he considered France as not politically existing, and most assuredly it would take up much time to restore her to her former active existence. "Gallos quoque in bellis floruisse audivimus" might possibly be the language of the rising generation. . . The French had shown themselves the ablest architects of ruin that had hitherto existed in the world. In the short space of time since the House had been prorogued in the summer, they had completely pulled down to the ground their monarchy, their Church, their nobility, their law, their revenue, their army, their navy, their commerce, their arts, and their manufactures. They had done their business for us as rivals, in a way which twenty Ramillies or Blenheims could never have done it.'[1]

But if France was no longer dangerous from her power, it did not follow, in the judgment of Burke, that she was not dangerous from her example. France had always, he said, exercised to an extraordinary degree an attractive influence on surrounding States. He described vividly the system of splendid military despotism established by Lewis XIV., and how, in consequence of its example, 'the same character of despotism insinuated itself into every Court in Europe; the same spirit of disproportioned magnificence; the same love of standing armies above the ability of the people.' In England the attractive influence of France gave a fatal

[1] It is curious to compare these very erroneous predictions with the judgment formed about the same time in Paris by Gouverneur Morris. Writing to Washington (Jan. 24, 1790), he says, 'It is very difficult to guess whereabouts the flock will settle when it flies so wild; but as far as it is possible to guess at present, this (late) kingdom will be cast into a congeries of little democracies, laid out not according to the rivers, mountains, &c., but with the square and compass. . . . Their Assemblée Nationale will be something like the old Congress, and the King will be called Executive Magistrate.' Morris's *Works*, ii. 91.

bias to the Government of the Stuarts; it affected in some degree all ranks of the people, and in consequence it became a main object of English patriots of the seventeenth century 'to break off all communication with France, and to beget a total alienation from its councils and examples,' which, through the religious animosities that divided the nations, they were able in some degree to effect. 'This day the evil is totally changed in France, but there is an evil there . . . and the natural mental habits of mankind are such that the present distemper is far more likely to be contagious than the old one; for it is not quite easy to spread a passion for servitude among the people, but in all evils of the opposite kind our natural inclinations are flattered. . . . Our present danger from the example of a people whose character knows no medium is, with regard to government, a danger from anarchy—a danger of being led, through an admiration of successful fraud and violence, to the excesses of a . . . proscribing, plundering, ferocious, and tyrannical democracy. On the side of religion, the danger is no longer from intolerance, but from atheism.'

He then proceeded to advert to the recent speech of Fox. In his own opinion, he said, 'the very worst part of the example set is in the late assumption of citizenship by the army.' It was with 'inexpressible pain' that he heard Fox, whom of all living politicians he most venerated and loved, drop some expressions eulogising the conduct of the French army. He attributed his language wholly to a 'zeal for the best of all causes—liberty,' and he digressed into a very eloquent eulogy of his character and services. If he came forward to mark 'an expression or two of his best friend,' it was on account of his anxiety 'to keep the distemper of France from the least countenance in England, where he was sure some wicked persons had shown a strong

disposition to recommend an imitation of the French spirit of reform . . . a spirit well calculated to overturn States, but perfectly unfit to amend them.' That he was himself no enemy to reformation, the whole of his parliamentary career abundantly showed, but he protested against those who gloried in making a revolution, as though revolutions were good things in themselves, and he declared that 'everything which unnecessarily tore to pieces the contexture of the State, not only prevented all real reformation, but introduced evils' of the gravest kind. 'The French have made their way, through the destruction of their country, to a bad constitution. . . . They have destroyed all the balances and counterpoises which serve to fix the State and give it a steady direction, and which furnish sure correctives to any violent spirit which may prevail in any of the orders. . . . They have, with the most atrocious perfidy and breach of faith, laid the axe to the root of all property, and consequently of all national prosperity, by the principles they established and the example they set, in confiscating all the possessions of the Church,' and they have justified their proceedings by 'a sort of digest of anarchy, called the Rights of Man,' which was well fitted to destroy every hold of authority by opinion, religious or civil, on the minds of the people.

Having dilated at considerable length on this theme, and especially on the ruinous consequences of emancipating the army from the obligations of discipline and obedience, Burke proceeded, by arguments which were more fully developed in his later writings, to show the great differences between the French Revolution and the English Revolution of 1688; and he concluded a very eloquent speech by declaring, that for his part he wished few alterations in the English Constitution,

'happy if he left it not the worse for any share he had taken in its service.'

It was a strange speech to have been made upon the army estimates, but it foreshadowed clearly the whole course of Burke's French policy, and the approaching and inevitable disruption of the Whig party. Fox answered in a strain of the highest personal respect. If he put, he said, into one scale all the political information he had derived from books, from science, from knowledge of the world and its affairs, and in the other the improvement which he had derived from Burke's instruction and conversation, he would find it difficult to decide which scale preponderated. He declared himself equally the enemy of all absolute forms of government, whether they were monarchies, aristocracies, or democracies; and he deplored the recent bloodshed and cruelty in France, while ascribing these evils mainly to the tyranny of the old monarchy. At the same time, he reiterated his eulogy of the conduct of the French soldiers, and his gratification at the events in France; and he maintained that there was a closer parallel than Burke admitted between the French Revolution and the English Revolution of 1688. Sheridan, apparently nettled by some observations of Burke, greatly aggravated the situation by a speech in which he praised the French Revolution almost without reserve, and dilated with some acrimony on the inconsistency of Burke. Pitt in a short speech warmly praised Burke, and expressed a general agreement with his views.[1]

As is always the case, many personal motives were attributed to the principal actors in the drama. Fox, who during the Regency question had found himself in a

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 337-374. There is an interesting account of this debate in Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 349-354.

great measure displaced by Pitt as the representative of popular opinions, was now accused of endeavouring to revive a waning popularity by appealing to strong democratic passions, while accusations of a corresponding character were more persistently urged against Burke. It was noticed that for the last three years his confidential intercourse with Fox had greatly diminished; that he was known to be dissatisfied with the manner in which Fox had conducted the Regency question; that he was much alienated from Sheridan, whose character he disliked, and who, through his personal intimacy with the Prince of Wales, had recently acquired a new prominence in the party.[1] It was said, too, that Burke was profoundly disappointed and acidulated by the extreme unpopularity he had incurred both within and without the House; tired of long and fruitless opposition in company with men who were growing less and less congenial to him; overwhelmed with pecuniary embarrassments from which there seemed no outlet in opposition.

How far considerations of this kind may have biassed the judgments of the two statesmen, it is impossible to say; but no one, I think, who has studied their private letters, no one who has really gauged their characters, will doubt the sincerity or the energy of their convictions. The attitude of Fox on the French question was perfectly in harmony with the passionate and unqualified partisanship with which he had espoused the cause of the American Revolutionists; and all that I have written on the character and opinions of Burke has been written to no effect, if it has left any doubt in the minds of my readers that his later opinions were the natural, if not the legitimate, outcome of his earlier ones. The opinions he had invariably urged on the subject of parliamentary reform and triennial or

[1] See Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 23, 24, 70, 71, 76–78.

annual parliaments; his abhorrence of the Bill of Rights Men, and of all those democratic societies which had been for some years advocating in England political theories, closely resembling those of Rousseau; his repudiation of the authority of instructions by constituents in elections; the strongly aristocratic spirit that from first to last coloured his politics; the emphasis with which he always dwelt on the necessity of counterpoises, balances, and limitations in government; on the political value of habit, tradition, and unbroken continuity in institutions; on the danger of framing political measures by abstract reasoning, and of carrying a spirit of theory, experiment, and Utopia into practical politics—all indicated a nature organically and profoundly conservative. The very anomalies and inconsistencies of constitutions were venerable in his eyes, if they had been harmonised and consecrated by time; if they were compromises resulting from the pressure of multiform and conflicting interests; mitigations or adaptations created by, and suited to the feelings, habits, and necessities of society.[1]

The kind of politics which discards the traditions and institutions of the past, and endeavours to build up government anew on a logical and symmetrical plan furnished by political speculators, was beyond all others abhorrent to his mind, and it was this kind of politics which was now in the ascendant in France, and which

[1] I have quoted in former volumes much from Burke in this sense, but I may add a characteristic and beautiful passage in a letter to a French gentleman written in 1789. 'There is, by the essential, fundamental constitution of things, a radical infirmity in all human contrivances, and the weakness is often so attached to the very perfection of our political mechanism that some defect in it—something that stops short of its principle, something that controls, that mitigates, that moderates it—becomes a necessary corrective to the evils that the theoretic perfection would produce.'—Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 117.

was countenanced by some considerable men in England. Nor was the moral vehemence with which he threw himself into the contest other than might have been expected from him. No man ever possessed to a higher degree some of the noblest qualities of a judicial intellect; but no man was ever more wanting in the calmness, the coldness, and the discrimination of the judicial temperament. Acts of cruelty and oppression appealed to his imagination with an ungovernable force; and in the impeachment of Hastings, which was wholly unconnected with party interests, he showed exactly the same kind and measure of vehemence as in his speeches and writings on the French Revolution.

His speech on February 9 had an immense and immediate effect. During the debates on the Regency question, his ebullitions of extravagance and bad taste had almost deprived him of the ear of the House, and he often spoke amid an incessant clamour of scornful interruption. But it was impossible to mistake the deep thrill of approbation which now passed through all parts of the House, and the speech of the Minister, which contrasted curiously with that which he had made a few days before, showed clearly that Pitt shared the general feeling. Nor was the impression confined to Parliament. It was evident that Burke had expressed the unspoken fears of great sections of the community. 'The ferment and alarm are universal,' wrote Dr. Parr soon afterwards. 'All the papers are with Burke, even the Foxite papers which I have seen. . . . He is uncorrupt, I know, but his passions are quite headstrong.'[1]

From this time the division in the Whig party rapidly deepened. Two days after the debate that has been described, there was a long interview at Burling-

[1] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 72, 78.

ton-House between the Duke of Portland, Fox, Burke, Sheridan, and one or two others, but no agreement was arrived at.[1] There was, however, still no open breach. Sheridan and Burke, though profoundly alienated, met at the tables of the Prince of Wales and of the Duke of Portland. In the beginning of March, when Fox introduced his motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Burke, as we have already seen, opposed it, on the ground that revolutionary opinions had extended widely among the Dissenters, and that additional political power should never be given to those who were likely to misuse it; but in the course of his speech, he spoke warmly of Fox, and answered an attack which Pitt had made on that statesman, and a few weeks later Sheridan spoke in terms of high eulogy of Burke.[2]

Burke was in the mean time busily engaged in throwing into a matured and highly elaborated form his opinions on French affairs, and in November 1790 he published his 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' one of the most famous and valuable books of the eighteenth century. His earlier political works had been pamphlets, speeches, or letters, relating for the most part to passing and not very important questions, and they would now be as little read as the speeches of Pitt and Fox, if it were not for the skill with which Burke was accustomed to interweave in transient controversies political principles and observations of perennial interest. But the French Revolution was a subject worthy of all his powers. It naturally opened out the great questions of the foundations of political authority, the object and scope of government, the principles which underlie the English Constitution as established in the

[1] Compare Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, ii. 107. Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 351–354.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 433, 694.

seventeenth century, the fundamental rights of property, the place which corporations and especially ecclesiastical establishments occupy in the political system. Like nearly all Burke's works, his work 'On the French Revolution' is unfortunate in its form. It is a long, undivided, and ill-arranged letter to a member of the French Constituent Assembly, and some parts of it are much less valuable than the rest; but it is not too much to say that it contains pages of an eloquence which has never in any language been surpassed, and that no other English book affords so many lessons of enduring value to those who are engaged in the study either of the British Constitution or of the general principles of government. Together with the 'Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs,' which is its supplement and its defence, it should be read, re-read, and thoroughly mastered by everyone who desires to acquire wide and deep views on political questions, and to understand the best English political philosophy of the eighteenth century.

It is not a book to which adequate justice can be done by a simple abstract. Much of its charm lies in the numerous detached observations—the fruit of the lifelong experience of the most profound intellect that has ever been devoted in England to political questions—which are scattered over its pages, and in the wonderful power and beauty with which the writer expanded lines of argument which had been clearly foreshadowed, though less completely developed, in his earlier works. His main object was to contrast the system of government existing in England, in its principles and its genius, with that which had now obtained an ascendency in France. Dr. Price had represented the French Revolution as only a more perfect repetition of the English Revolution of 1688, and he maintained that Englishmen had then asserted their undoubted and

unlimited right to elect their governors, to cashier them for misconduct, and to form their Government for themselves. In opposition to this doctrine, Burke undertook to demonstrate the essentially hereditary, prescriptive, and traditional character of English freedom. He argued that the authors of the English Revolution, when they were compelled to deviate from the strict line of succession to the throne, justified this deviation on no plea of the rights of men, and on no vague and general charge of misconduct, but solely on the ground that the sovereign had committed a grave and manifest breach of the compact by which he held his crown; and he showed how carefully they studied in their legislation and public declarations to preserve unimpaired the hereditary character of the English monarchy, to maintain the continuity of English institutions and traditions, and to avoid grafting any alien or republican element on the old English stock. Developing this view, he proceeded to show, with a power of insight and an amplitude of illustration which no previous writer had approached, how institutions, laws, and governments only acquire their maximum of usefulness and strength, when they grow organically out of the traditions of the past, and form around themselves an appropriate atmosphere of habits and affections; how political institutions have indirect, remote, and often unforeseen effects which are frequently more important than their direct results; how good governments are formed by a slow and gradual process of adaptation and compromise extending over many generations, and not by either violent revolutions or political speculations.

To the steadiness with which this method had been maintained in English history, he mainly attributed the permanence of English freedom and prosperity. 'Our political system,' he wrote, 'is placed on a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world

and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed of transitory parts, wherein by the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole at one time is never old or middle-aged or young, but in a condition of unchangeable constancy moves on through the varied tenor of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. Thus by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the State, in what we improve we are never wholly new, in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete,' and it has been 'our old settled maxim never entirely nor at once to depart from antiquity.' Old local institutions and bonds of union should be carefully preserved, for 'to be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affection.' Hereditary institutions in addition to their other merits have the great virtue of strengthening those traditional feelings, habits, and opinions which at once support, mitigate, and restrain authority and bind together successive generations in one organic whole. The union of Church and State gives a moral consecration to the acts of Government, and sustains and diffuses a sentiment of reverence and a tone of manners very conducive to political stability. Even prejudice and superstition, which were the special enemies of the new school of writers, have their place in the political system, and will not be despised or neglected by a wise statesman.

The language of Burke on this subject is curiously characteristic: 'It has been the misfortune (not, as these gentlemen think it, the glory) of this age, that everything is to be discussed, as if the Constitution of our country were to be always a subject rather of altercation than enjoyment.' 'To avoid the evils of inconstancy and versatility, ten thousand times worse than

those of obstinacy and the blindest prejudice, we have consecrated the State, that no man should approach to look into its defects or corruptions but with due caution, that he should never dream of beginning its reformation by its subversion, that he should approach to the faults of the State as to the wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude. By this wise prejudice we are taught to look with horror on those children of their country who are prompted rashly to hack that aged parent to pieces and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds and wild incantations they may regenerate the paternal constitution.' 'You see, sir,' he continues, 'that in this enlightened age I am bold enough to confess that we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our old prejudices, we cherish them to a very considerable degree, and to take more shame to ourselves we cherish them because they are prejudices, and the longer they have lasted and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them.[1] We are afraid to put men to live and trade

[1] Compare Pascal: 'L'art de bouleverser les Etats est d'ébranler les coutumes établies, en sondant jusques dans leur source, pour y faire remarquer le défaut d'autorité et de justice. Il faut, dit-on, recourir aux loix fondamentales et primitives de l'Etat, qu'une coutume injuste a abolies. C'est un jeu sûr pour tout perdre. Rien ne sera juste à cette balance.' *Pensées*, 'Foiblesse de l'Homme.' In a very characteristic letter expostulating against the ecclesiastical innovations which the Emperor was introducing into the Austrian Netherlands, Burke wrote: 'Whilst he is destroying prejudices which (under good management) may become the surest support of his Government, is he not afraid that the discussion may go further than he wishes? If he excites men to inquire too scrupulously into the foundation of all old opinion, may he not have reason to apprehend that several will see as little use in monarchs as in monks? The question is not whether they will argue logically or not, but whether the turn of mind which leads to such discussions may not become as fatal to the former as the latter. *Correspondence*, iii. 209.

each on his own private stock of reason because we suspect that this stock in each man is small, and that the individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and capital of nations and of ages. Many of our men of speculation, instead of exploding general prejudices, employ their sagacity to discover the latent wisdom which prevails in them. If they find what they seek, and they seldom fail, they think it more wise to continue the prejudice with the reason involved, than to cast away the coat of prejudice and to leave nothing but the naked reason, because prejudice with its reason has a motive to give action to that reason, and an affection which will give it permanence. Prejudice is of ready application in the emergency. It previously engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue, and does not leave the man hesitating in the moment of decision, sceptical, puzzled, and unresolved. Prejudice renders a man's virtue his habit, and not a series of unconnected acts. Through just prejudice his duty becomes a part of his nature.' It is true that certain 'institutions savour of superstition in their very principle, and they nourish it by a permanent and standing influence; . . . but this ought not to hinder you from deriving from superstition itself any resources which may thence be furnished for the public advantage. You derive benefits from many dispositions and many passions of the human mind which are of as doubtful a colour in the moral eye as superstition itself. . . . Superstition is the religion of feeble minds, and they must be tolerated in an intermixture of it in some trifling or some enthusiastic shape or other, else you will deprive weak minds of a resource found necessary to the strongest. . . . Wise men . . . do not violently hate these things. Wisdom is not the most severe corrector of folly. They are the rival follies which mutually wage so unrelenting a war.' Nothing

is more to be dreaded by statesmen than a shock in which old and traditional manners and opinions perish; 'public affections combined with manners are required, sometimes as supplements, sometimes as correctives, always as aids to law. . . . There ought to be a system of manners in every nation which a well-formed mind would be disposed to relish. . . . When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no compass to govern us.'

Applying these principles to political action, Burke once more drew in strong and vivid lines his picture of a wise statesman. 'The science of constructing a commonwealth or renovating it or reforming it is, like every other experimental science, not to be taught *à priori*. Nor is it a short experience that can instruct us in that practical science, because the real effects of moral causes are not always immediate. That which in the first instance is prejudicial may be excellent in its remoter operation, . . . and very plausible schemes with very pleasing commencements have often shameful and lamentable conclusions. In states there are often some obscure and almost latent causes, things which appear at first view of little moment, on which a very great part of its prosperity or adversity may most essentially depend. The science of government being . . . a matter which requires experience, and even more experience than any person can gain in his whole life, however sagacious and observing he may be, it is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice which has answered in any tolerable degree for ages the common purposes of society. . . . The nature of man is intricate, the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity, and therefore no simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature or to the quality of

his affairs. . . . The simple governments are fundamentally defective, to say no worse of them. If you were to contemplate society in but one point of view, the simple modes of polity are infinitely captivating. . . . But it is better that the whole should be imperfectly and anomalously answered, than that while some parts are provided for with great exactness, others might be totally neglected.'

'The fixed form of a constitution whose merits are confirmed by the solid test of long experience, and an increasing public strength and national prosperity,' can never be too sedulously protected. 'The true lawgiver ought . . . to love and respect his kind and to fear himself. . . . In my course I have known, and according to my measure have co-operated with, great men, and I have never yet seen any plan which has not been mended by the observations of those who were much inferior in understanding to the person who took the lead in the business. By a slow but well-sustained progress, the effect of each step is watched; the good or ill success of the first gives light to see the second, and so from light to light we are conducted with safety through the whole series. We see that the parts of the system do not clash. The evils latent in the most promising contrivances are provided for as they arise. One advantage is as little as possible sacrificed to another. We compensate, we reconcile, we balance. We are enabled to unite into a consistent whole the various anomalies and contending principles that are found in the minds and affairs of men. From hence arises not an excellence in simplicity, but one far superior, an excellence in composition.'

In opposition to this spirit of cautious and experimental legislation, he places the modes of political thought that had arisen among the politicians of France, 'who think little or nothing has been done before their time, and who place all their hopes in discovery; who

conceive very systematically that all things which give perpetuity are mischievous, and are therefore at inexpiable war with all establishments; who think that government may vary like modes of dress and with as little ill effect, and that there needs no principle of attachment, except a sense of present conveniency, to any constitution in the State.' 'A good patriot and a true politician always considers how he shall make the most of the existing materials of his country;' he is animated at once by 'a disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve;' his supreme merit is found in the skill with which he corrects the errors and defects, without weakening the foundations, of old establishments, and cures common distempers by regular methods. But the Parisian legislators begin by making a clear sweep of all old establishments. They at once despair of making any use of common means in their legislation. They treat their country 'as a kind of *carte blanche* on which they may scribble whatever they please.' They endeavour to reconstruct the whole framework of government and society from its basis, on principles of geometrical equality, with a total disregard for the antecedents and traditions of their country; for 'the ancient permanent sense,' and 'great influencing prejudices' of mankind; for that prescription which is the chief foundation of all property, and which alone 'mellows into legality governments that were violent in their commencement.'

It would carry us too far to follow Burke into his very elaborate and skilful examination of the measures of the National Assembly and of the revolutionary leaders in France. The magnificent pages in which he described the outrages which the King and Queen had received, and the ingratitude with which the repeated and ample royal concessions had been repaid, are well known. The contrast between Lewis XVI. and the

two Stuart sovereigns who had been dethroned by revolution, was indeed very marked, and Burke predicted with but too good reason that the fate which had fallen on the French King, Church, and aristocracy would put an end to that enlightened and tolerant spirit which had of late been so signally displayed by the chief sovereigns of Europe, and would make the governing classes everywhere suspicious, distrustful, and hostile to reform. Reviewing the state of the French Government as it existed before the Revolution, he said that, 'though usually, and I think justly, reported the best of the unqualified or ill-qualified monarchies, it was still full of abuses;' but he argued from the increase of French population and wealth, from the splendid achievements of France in so many forms and fields of greatness, that these abuses were far from intolerable. The Government was certainly not so 'incapable and undeserving of reform' that it was necessary that 'the whole fabric should be at once pulled down and the area cleared for the erection of a theoretic, experimental edifice in its place.' All France, he says, was of this opinion in the beginning of 1789. 'The instructions of the representatives to the States-General from every district in that kingdom were filled with projects for the reformation of that Government, without the remotest suggestion of a design to destroy it. Had such a design been even then insinuated, I believe there would have been but one voice, and that voice for rejecting it with scorn and horror.' He showed that the Sovereign had for some years been continually favouring reform, that although there were great abuses in the French Church, the spirit of intolerance had been steadily declining, and that the clergy as well as the nobles in their instructions to their representatives had expressly declared their willingness to abandon their exemptions from taxation. It was no doubt a great

and scandalous abuse that the privileged orders in France should be exempt from the payment of the taille, which was the heaviest tax; but Burke showed the gross falsehood of the assertion, which was so often made at the time of the Revolution, and which has been frequently repeated to our own day, that the privileged orders paid no taxes. The nobles paid the capitation, which was a progressive impost; they paid the land tax known as the '20th penny,' 'to the height sometimes of three, sometimes of four shillings in the pound;' they paid all the indirect taxes which made up a great part of the French revenue. The clergy, it is true, except in certain provinces, did not pay the capitation and the twentieths, but they had purchased their exemption from the first tax by a large sum, and they were accustomed to make what they termed 'free gifts,' which were a partial compensation for their exemption from the latter. At all events, by the free act of the clergy and nobles, the grievance of the exemptions was now at an end.

For the abuses in the collection of the revenue, which Burke truly described as the most serious, the privileged orders were not responsible. The sale of offices was in some respects a great evil, but it had at least the effect of bringing a constant stream of new men into the French nobility. They maintained, however, too punctiliously their distinction from other classes, but, as Burke truly and acutely observed, less punctiliously than the same class in Germany and some other countries. So far from being opposed to reform, they had caught to an excessive degree the innovating spirit of the time. The theory which attributed the excesses of the Revolution to the desperation of a downtrodden people struggling against intolerable oppression, appeared to Burke fundamentally and demonstrably false. Like Gouverneur Morris and Jefferson,

he maintained that, when the States-General met in 1789, no violence whatever was required to make France a free country, for no resistance was to be apprehended. 'Read the instructions' (of the nobility), he wrote, 'to their representatives. They breathe the spirit of liberty as warmly, and they recommend reformation as strongly, as any other order. Their privileges relative to contribution were voluntarily surrendered, as the King from the beginning surrendered all pretence to a right of taxation. Upon a free Constitution there was but one opinion in France. The absolute monarchy was at an end. It breathed its last without a groan, without a struggle, without convulsion. All the struggle, all the dissension arose afterwards, upon the preference of a despotic democracy to a Government of reciprocal control. The triumph of the victorious party was over the principles of the British Constitution.'

The English admirers of the Revolution were accustomed to enumerate with triumph the many measures of incontestable reform which the National Assembly had carried. It was undoubtedly true, Burke answered, that 'among an infinite number of acts of violence and folly, some good may have been done. They who destroy everything will certainly remove some grievance. They who make everything new have a chance that they may establish something beneficial. But to give them credit for what they have done in virtue of the authority they have usurped . . . it must appear that the same things could not have been accomplished without producing such a revolution. Most assuredly they might; because almost every one of the regulations made by them, which is not very equivocal, was either in the cession of the King, voluntarily made at the meeting of the States, or in the concurrent instructions of the orders.'

Of the old Constitution of France—if indeed that

could be regarded as a constitution which had never more than a shadowy and precarious existence—he spoke with more respect than it deserved. 'You had the elements,' he wrote, 'of a constitution very nearly as good as could be wished. In your old states you possessed that variety of parts corresponding with the various descriptions of which your community was happily composed. You had all that combination and all that opposition of interests which in the natural and in the political world from the reciprocal struggle of discordant powers draws out the harmony of the universe. Those opposed and conflicting interests which you considered as so great a blemish in your old, and our present Constitution, interpose a salutary check to all precipitate resolutions; they render deliberation a matter not of choice but of necessity; they make all change a subject of compromise, which naturally begets moderation . . . preventing the sore evil of harsh, crude, unqualified reformations, and rendering all the headlong exertions of arbitrary power in the few or in the many for ever impracticable. . . . You had all these advantages in your ancient states, but you chose to act as if you had never been moulded into civil society and had everything to begin anew.'

What, then, was likely to be the issue of the Revolution? The wisdom of a statesman is mainly shown in the justice of his forecasts, and in order to estimate the amount of sagacity which was exhibited by Burke we must remember that the 'Reflections' appeared as early as November 1790, in the golden days of the Revolution, before the September massacres, before the trial and execution of the King, before the Convention, before the Reign of Terror. The work of the Revolution was regarded by its admirers as substantially achieved, and it was believed that the National As-

sembly had constructed on a sure basis a great and enduring edifice of freedom.

The opposition of Burke to these views was fundamental. He not only predicted—which perhaps needed but little sagacity—that the paper money, with which the new governors of France were now flooding the country, could not possibly maintain its value, and that the confiscation of Church property would be wholly insufficient to avert bankruptcy; but he also maintained that the new system of government in all its parts was inevitably transitory. He declared that the position assigned to the King was an impossible one, and that it must lead to the complete destruction of the monarchy; that the new civic constitution of the clergy could only be considered 'preparatory to the utter abolition under any of its forms of the Christian religion;' that the present constitution of the legislative power could not possibly last; and that, as the Revolution proceeded, power would pass more and more into the most violent hands. 'When the leaders choose to make themselves bidders at an auction of popularity . . . they will become flatterers instead of legislators; the instruments, not the guides, of the people. I fancy if any of them should happen to propose a scheme of liberty, soberly limited and defined, he will be immediately outbid by his competitors, who will produce something more splendidly popular. Suspicions will be raised of his fidelity to his cause. Moderation will be stigmatised as the virtue of cowards, and compromise as the prudence of traitors.' Already in the National Assembly 'their idea of their powers is always taken at the utmost stretch of legislative competency, and their examples for common cases from the exceptions of the most urgent necessity. The future is to be in most respects like the present Assembly; but by the mode of the new elections, and the tendency of the

new circulations, it will be purged of the small minority chosen originally from various interests, and preserving something of their spirit. If possible, the next Assembly must be worse than the present.'

All these predictions, though indignantly repudiated by the admirers of the Revolution, proved literally and accurately true. But beyond the immediate future there were other consequences which it was perhaps more difficult to anticipate. That the movement was not in the direction of true political liberty, Burke firmly believed. Political liberty, according to his conception, flourishes when various interests are strongly organised, when power is so divided, limited, balanced, and controlled that no single element can obtain omnipotence. The three branches of legislative power in the British Constitution, the federal system in the United States and in Switzerland, the independent Parliaments of France, and the three orders in her States-General, supplied the indispensable materials for compromise and control; but the path which was taken by the National Assembly was a path that led to despotism, though it might be the despotism of an unqualified democracy. Nor were the moral conditions more favourable. 'All other people have laid the foundations of civil freedom in severer manners and a system of a more austere and masculine morality. France when she let loose the reins of regal authority doubled the licence of a ferocious dissoluteness in manners, and an insolent irreligion in opinions and practice.' In the opinion of Burke, the probable close of the anarchy of the Revolution was a military despotism. 'The army will remain for some time mutinous and full of faction, until some popular general, who understands the art of conciliating the soldiery and who possesses the true spirit of command, shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself. . . . But the moment in which

that event shall happen, the person who really commands the army is your master; the master (that is little) of your King, the master of your Assembly, the master of your whole republic.'[1] Should such a despot arise, he will find that the legislation which crushed and levelled all the orders in the State has greatly facilitated his career. 'If the present prospect of a Republic should fail, all securities to a moderated freedom fall along with it; all the indirect restraints which mitigate despotism are removed; insomuch that if monarchy should ever again obtain an entire ascendency in France, under this or any other dynasty, it will probably be, if not voluntarily tempered at setting out by the wise and virtuous counsels of the Prince, the most completely arbitrary power that has ever appeared on earth.'[2]

But while Burke as early as 1790 clearly foresaw

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[1] This prediction may be compared with the forecast of Catherine II. as it appears in her most curious and most unreserved correspondence with Grimm, which has been published by the Société Hist. of Russia. In 1791 she wrote: 'Quand viendra ce César? Oh! il viendra, gardez vous d'en douter. Il faudrait feuilleter l'histoire et voir si jamais pays ait été sauvé par autre qu'un réellement grand homme, et d'après cette découverte je prédirais ce qu'il en sera de la France. "Finis coronat opus." . . . Selon moi ils sont bien propres à discréditer pour longtemps la liberté et à la rendre odieuse à tous les peuples.' 'Si la Révolution Française prend en Europe, il viendra un autre Gengis ou Tamerlan la mettre à la raison. Voilà son sort, soyez en assuré.' *Lettres de Catherine à Grimm*, pp. 503, 520, 537, 555. John Adams, who, like Morris, looked with great repulsion on the French Revolution, predicted, in 1789, that it would probably lead to the destruction of a million of human beings. Morgan's *Life of Price*, p. 158.

[2] So Machiavelli maintained that a usurper who has acquired sovereignty without right, and who does not wish to govern by fixed laws, can find no better way of maintaining himself upon the throne than by revolutionising at the very beginning of his reign all the old institutions of the State. *Discorsi sopra Tito Liv.* lib. i. c. 26.

the probable rise of a Napoleon, he did not undertake to forecast the final issue. A revolution which destroyed old orders, institutions, traditions, manners, reverence, and beliefs, and which concentrated all power in a single democratic chamber, seemed to him to destroy the essential elements that give permanence and security to Governments. No Government in Europe had hitherto been more firmly rooted through every vicissitude of fortune than that of France, but in the judgment of Burke a new principle of instability was now passing into French affairs. 'You are young,' he wrote, 'you cannot guide but must follow the fortunes of your country; but hereafter my sentiments may be of some use to you in some future form which your Commonwealth may take. In the present it can hardly remain, but before its final settlement it may be obliged to pass, as one of our poets says, "through great varieties of untried being," and in all its transmigrations to be purified by fire and by blood.'

Such were the judgments formed by Burke of these new and startling events which were regarded by Fox as so fortunate and so glorious, and it would be difficult to find a more striking instance of sagacity justified by the event. On some points, however, his forecast proved mistaken. Though much less confident than when he spoke in Parliament, he had not yet abandoned the opinion, which was at this time general among European statesmen, that the Revolution would reduce France to a long period of military and political impotence. He believed—as the event proved, very erroneously—that she would lose that wonderful recuperative energy which she had displayed after the civil wars of the Fronde, and he shared the delusion of Morris that when she was divided into eighty-three independent municipalities, all animated by the popular spirit of insubordination, those municipalities would never submit to the central

Government in Paris. Revolts like that of La Vendée seemed to him likely to be frequent, and like Morris he thought it not impossible that France would be for a time broken up into a number of small republics.

His estimate also of the effects of the spoliation of Church property is tinged with much exaggeration and error. It is closely connected with his views of the nature of Church establishments, and the eloquent pages which he devoted to this subject, though extremely impressive to his contemporaries, are very alien to the opinions of our own day. On this subject, as we have already had some occasion to see, he agreed much less with Hoadley, Warburton, and Paley, than with Hooker and the Nonjurors. His opinions were in truth not Whig, but Tory, and they belonged to a kind of Toryism which, though once very prevalent, has now almost wholly ceased to be an operative principle in European politics. The prevailing Whig doctrine of an Established Church was simply, that the secular State of its own free will conferred certain endowments and privileges on the clergy of the most considerable religious body in the community, in order that they might more efficiently discharge functions which are of the highest importance to the nation. The connection between Church and State was based upon expediency, and it was defended by purely utilitarian arguments. These arguments have been rarely stated more skilfully than by Burke, but he himself always looked upon the connection between Church and State as something of a mystical and transcendental nature. One of the first principles of his political philosophy is that a nation is a distinct corporate entity, bound together by institutions, habits, opinions, and tendencies, and preserving its separate and continuous individuality from age to age. One of the supreme ends of politics is to strengthen this national life; to maintain that steady

stream of habit, interest, and feeling, without which 'the Commonwealth itself would in a few generations crumble away, be disconnected into the dust and powder of individuality, and at length dispersed to all the winds of heaven.' Chief among these influences is the national religion, and without it the nation would be almost like a body without a soul.

But not only is a National Church the chief cementing influence in the State, it is 'the oblation of the State itself' to the Divinity. The people of England, he said, 'persuaded that all things ought to be done with reference, and referring all to the point of reference to which all should be directed, think themselves bound . . . in their corporate character to perform their national homage to the Institutor, and Author, and Protector of civil society, without which civil society man could not by any possibility arrive at the perfection of which his nature is capable, nor even make a remote and faint approach to it. They conceive that He who gave our nature to be perfected by our virtue, willed also the necessary means of its perfection. He willed, therefore, the State. He willed its connection with the source and original Archetype of all perfection. . . . It is on some such principles that the majority of the people of England, far from thinking a religious National Establishment unlawful, hardly think it lawful to be without one. . . . They do not consider their Church Establishment as convenient, but as essential to their State; not as a thing heterogeneous and separable, something added for accommodation which they may either keep up or lay aside according to their temporary ideas of convenience. They consider it as the foundation of their whole Constitution, with which and with every part of which it holds an indissoluble union. Church and State are ideas inseparable in their minds, and scarcely is the one ever mentioned without mention-

ing the other,' and he added, probably with perfect truth, that in attributing this high religious sanctity to the union of Church and State he faithfully represented the general sentiments of the English people.

It is obvious that such a doctrine has a vital bearing on the question of the right of the State to dispose of ecclesiastical property. The doctrine which is now most generally received is that the property of an Established Church, in as far as it is derived from public sources, is national property, and that the State has a right to alienate or resume it, subject to the obligation of compensating fully the life interests of its ministers. A doctrine of this kind was clearly implied in the admirable chapter of Paley on 'Religious Establishments,' and in the no less admirable article on Endowments inserted by Turgot in the 'Encyclopædia.' It appears to have been widely, perhaps generally, held by the political classes in England;[1] and even after the great struggles of the Reformation, the power of the State over Church property had been repeatedly and sometimes most violently exercised. The secularisation of some of the richest benefices in Germany that followed the Peace

[1] 'When I entered life,' Wilberforce once wrote, 'it is astonishing how general was the disposition to seize upon Church property. I mixed with very various circles, and I could hardly go into any company, where there was not a clergyman present, without hearing some such measure proposed. I am convinced that if the public feeling had not been altered by our seeing how soon every other kind of plunder followed the destruction of tithes in France, our clergy would by this time have lost their property.' *Life of Wilberforce*, i. 261. The arguments of those who maintain that the tithes of the Anglican Church were not derived from the State, and that their alienation from the Church is beyond its moral competence, and would be an act of plunder, will be found powerfully stated in Dr. Brewer's *Endowments and Establishment of the Church of England*, and in Lord Selborne's *Defence of the Church of England against Disestablishment*.

of Westphalia; the destruction of the Episcopal Church in Scotland; the suppression of some hundreds of monasteries by Joseph II.; and the confiscation of Jesuit property by the chief Catholic Governments of the Continent, are conspicuous examples. But Burke treated the sale of Church property in 1789 as if it was exactly equivalent to the confiscation of private property, except that it carried with it the added guilt of sacrilege. Nor did he base his argument to any great extent upon the inadequacy of the salaries that were granted to a portion of the dispossessed priests. 'The estate of the Church' he considered as 'incorporated and identified with the mass of private property, of which the State is not the proprietor, either for use or dominion, but the guardian only and the regulator.' 'When once the Commonwealth has established the estates of the Church as property, it can consistently hear nothing of the more or the less. Too much and too little are treason against property.' The act of the National Assembly in seizing the ecclesiastical property appeared to him a 'dishonest, perfidious, and cruel confiscation of that property which it was their first duty to protect,' and he declared that the paper money, which was issued on the security of this confiscated property, was 'stamped with the indelible character of sacrilege.'

For this reason, though not for this reason alone, he considered the Revolution in France a most formidable blow to the rights of property. It was one of his firm convictions that property never can be secure under a representative Government in which it does not possess a preponderating power,[1] and the property qualification

[1] 'Nothing is a due and adequate representation of a State that does not represent its ability as well as its property. But as ability is a vigorous and active principle, and as property is sluggish, inert, and timid, it never can be safe from the inva-

which was exacted from the French electors under their new Constitution seemed to him wholly inadequate. The confiscation of Church property, he considered an act of robbery, and the certain precursor of still greater invasions of property. I have quoted the passage from his speech in February 1790, in which he denounced the French Assembly for having 'laid the axe to the root of all property, and consequently of all national prosperity, by the principles they established and the example they set, in confiscating all the possessions of the Church,'[1] and in his 'Reflections on the French Revolution' he expressed his firm belief that the precedent was likely to be followed, and applied in turn to other large denominations of men.

It was not, he said, so much the confiscation of Church property that he dreaded, though this would be no trifling evil. What he feared was 'lest it should ever be considered in England as the policy of a State to seek a resource in confiscations of any kind,' and lest 'one description of citizens should be brought to regard any of the others as their proper prey.' The danger

sion of ability unless it be out of all proportion predominant in the representation. It must be represented, too, in great masses of accumulation, or it is not rightly protected. The characteristic essence of property formed out of the combined principles of its acquisition and conservation is to be unequal. The great masses, therefore, which excite envy and tempt rapacity must be out of the possibility of danger. There they form a natural rampart about the lesser properties in all their gradations. The same quantity of property which is by the natural course of things divided among many has not the same operation. Its defensive power is weakened as it is diffused. In this diffusion each man's portion is less than what in the eagerness of his desires he may flatter himself to obtain by dissipating the accumulations of others. The plunder of the few would indeed give but a share inconceivably small in the distribution to the many, but the many are not capable of making this calculation.' See, too, Aristotle's remarks on the causes of revolution in democracies, *Politics*, book v. c. v.

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxviii. 358.

seemed the more imminent as the burden of national debts was rapidly increasing, and he predicted that 'public debts, which at first were a security to Governments by interesting many in the public tranquillity, were likely in their excess to become the means of their subversion.'

But, in addition to these considerations, he maintained that the essential principles and modes of reasoning of a pure democracy were incompatible with the security of property. 'If prescription be once shaken,' he writes, 'no species of property is secure when it once becomes an object large enough to tempt the cupidity of indigent power.' But 'with the National Assembly of France possession is nothing; law and usage are nothing.' They 'openly reprobate the doctrine of prescription, which one of the greatest of their own lawyers tells us, with great truth, is a part of the law of nature.' They teach their followers 'to abhor and reject all feudality as the barbarism of tyranny,' and the people will soon come to recognise that 'almost the whole system of landed property in its origin is feudal,' and that the origin of the oldest properties was 'the distribution of the possessions of the original proprietors, made by a barbarous conqueror to his barbarous instruments.'

'The peasants,' he continued, 'in all probability are the descendants of these ancient proprietors, Romans or Gauls, but if they fail in any degree in the titles which they make on the principles of antiquaries and lawyers, they retreat into the citadel of the rights of men. There they find that men are equal, and the Earth, the kind and equal mother of all, ought not to be monopolised to foster the pride and luxury of any men who by nature are no better than themselves, and who if they do not labour for their bread are worse. They find that by the laws of nature the occupant and subduer of the soil is the true proprietor, that there is no prescription against

nature, that the agreements (where any there are) which have been made with their landlords during the time of slavery are only the effects of duress and force, and that when the people re-entered into the rights of men, these agreements were made as void as everything else which had been settled under the prevalence of the old feudal and aristocratic tyranny. . . . As to the title by succession, they will tell you that the succession of those who have cultivated the soil is the true pedigree of property, and not rotten parchments and silly substitutions; that the lords have enjoyed their usurpation too long; and that if they allow to these lay monks any charitable pension, they ought to be thankful to the bounty of the true proprietor, who is so generous towards a false claimant to his goods.'

Such language has a strangely familiar sound to a modern politician, but the connection of nineteenth century socialism with the French Revolution, though probably real, is not very close. In the great intellectual and speculative movement of innovation that preceded that Revolution, there were indeed several doctrines which, if pushed to their ultimate consequences, were very unfavourable to the existing social system. The doctrine that all morals spring from and depend on utility, and that therefore there can be no consideration of right in opposition to a well-ascertained and general utility; the doctrine that the State is omnipotent over its members, and that it is its task and duty to exert its powers to raise them to the highest level of virtue and happiness; the doctrine that man is essentially good, and that his vices and misery are mainly the result of the social system; and finally, the doctrine that equality is the supreme ideal at which the legislator should aim, were all well fitted to prepare the way for socialistic changes. A habit of mind was widely diffused, which systematically depreciated custom

and prescription, and the great prominence which the writings of Plato and the institutions of Sparta had obtained in political speculation, tended in the same direction.

But on the whole, in the immense mass of speculation which appeared in France in the fifty years before the Revolution, there was very little directed against the institutions of property. I have already quoted the famous passage in the 'Discourse on Inequality,' in which Rousseau declared that the earth and its fruits were the property of all, and that the man who first claimed a portion of the earth as his own was the true founder of civil society, and the source of innumerable calamities to mankind. As we have seen, however, this passage by no means represents the true opinions of its author when he had arrived at his maturity, and it loses much of its significance when it is remembered that it forms part of an argument to prove the superiority of savage to civilised life. Doctrines of a more consistently and violently socialistic character had been promulgated by Morelly in his 'Code of Nature,' and in one of the early writings of Brissot de Warville, but neither of these works had much importance or influence. The true father of French socialism is Mably, who, in several of his writings, preached the necessity of a social revolution, and elaborately attacked the whole institution of property.[1] Equality, he maintains, is the first object at which the legislator should aim, but equality can never permanently subsist where private property is suffered to accumulate. The true remedy for human ills is to be found in a community of goods such as he supposed to

[1] See especially his *Traité de la Législation*, his *Entretiens de Phocion*, and his *Doutes sur l'Ordre Naturel des Sociétés*. In England, similar attacks on hereditary property were afterwards made by Godwin, and by one or two other less known writers. See Godwin's *Political Justice*, book viii.

have existed in Sparta. Such a system, he admitted, was no longer practicable, but Government can at least do much to mitigate the evil. Instead of being intended to protect the property and the energies of individuals, and to promote the development of national resources, it should be its main object to maintain the citizens in an equality of fortune and of position; to prevent the accumulation either of individual or of national wealth, and to extirpate as far as possible from society the passions of ambition and avarice. A poor country with few wants, no luxury or art, and no division of classes, is the best, and the legislator should always remember that private property, with the passions and the inequalities it produces, is the supreme evil in the State. He should combat it systematically by severe laws of succession; by sumptuary laws crushing all luxury and commerce; by agrarian laws limiting the amount of land which each man may possess; by a system of education discouraging every kind of luxury and inequality; by imposing every trammel in his power on those natural superiorities of intellect and character that enable some men in the competitions of life to outrun their fellows.

Startling and systematic paradox, when accompanied by some real literary ability, seldom fails in attaining a speedy, though transient, notoriety, and the works of Mably were very widely read by the generation which preceded and which made the Revolution. But although the violence of class warfare, and the extreme necessities of the State, led to some gigantic measures of confiscation, and although some of the acts and language of the Convention were clearly socialistic, the Revolution did not ultimately turn in this direction. In the Declaration of Rights it is stated that, 'property being an inviolable and sacred right, no one can be deprived of it except when public necessity, legally established, evidently

requires it, and then only on condition of a just indemnity paid in advance,' and it would be a great injustice to the National Assembly to regard this declaration as mere idle words. In abolishing the sale of offices, and suppressing innumerable functionaries and corporations, it fully recognised rights to indemnity. It granted 450,000,000 livres for the magisterial posts, 35,000,000 for military employments, and 52,000,000 for places in the King's household. It laid down the principle that it is the duty of the nation to repay the price of every purchased office, and to assume the debts of every corporation which it suppressed,[1] and it carried out this principle with an integrity which contrasts very favourably with many episodes in the history of the monarchy. It rejected, as inconsistent with the public faith, a proposed tax on the interest of the national debt, and it entirely abstained from the favourite socialistic policy of imposing excessive or confiscating duties on successions.[2]

In judging its legislation about the feudal system, it must be remembered that the revolt of the peasantry, reducing a great part of France to anarchy, and making the collection of feudal dues almost impossible, had preceded by some weeks the famous sitting of August 4. That day is perhaps the most glorious in the French Revolution, and it ought not to be forgotten that it was the Vicomte de Noailles and the Duc d'Aiguillon, two conspicuous members of the privileged orders, who took the leading part in the abolition of the feudal rights. The Assembly declared the feudal system abolished, but, as I have already observed, it distinguished clearly the rights that grew out of ancient servitude, or old administrative functions which were no longer performed, from those which were of the nature of property and

[1] Laferrière, *Hist. des Principes, des Institutions, et des Lois pendant la Révolution*, pp. 104, 105.
[2] Ibid. pp. 44, 45, 47.

sprang for the most part from contract. The former it abolished without compensation, but the title of the owners of the latter to compensation was fully recognised. The Assembly may be blamed for having decreed the abolition of the feudal system, before it had taken measures for commuting the rights it recognised, but its original intention was a perfectly honest one, though it was defeated by the revolt of the peasantry, and abandoned in the confiscating legislation of the Convention.[1]

It is impossible, also, to deny the extreme and pressing necessity under which the measure for confiscating the ecclesiastical property was adopted. The Assembly had inherited a financial condition which was nearly desperate, and some of its most popular, and in the end most beneficial, measures contributed to make it hopeless. It abolished the gabelle, or salt monopoly, which had long been the occasion of deep popular discontent, and an amount of salt which had previously cost fourteen sous could now be purchased for one sou. It abolished or reduced the duties on tobacco, oil, leather, soap, and some other articles largely used by the poor. It put an end to the sale of offices, which had been a great source of revenue to the Crown, and, at a considerable cost to the State, it attached the army to the Revolution by raising its pay. Great sums were at the same time required for the indemnities for suppressed offices, and to meet the necessities of the famine. In the sphere of finance, as in all else, the National Assembly effected a complete revolution. It repealed most of the old taxes, and imposed a new stamp duty and new taxes on land, capital and industry, and it abolished all

[1] The history of the abolition of the feudal system has been very carefully examined by Doniol, *La Révolution Française et la Féodalité*, and by Chénon, *Les Démembrements de la Propriété foncière avant et après la Révolution*.

the old exemptions from taxation, the arbitrary methods of fixing contributions, and the abusive and wasteful system of farming the revenue. But in the complete social and moral anarchy that prevailed, it was found scarcely possible to collect taxes, and every source of revenue diminished, while the expenditure was rapidly increasing. Desperate attempts were made to borrow; but though Necker was still at the head of the finances, the credit of the country was gone. In August 1789 two separate loans, one of thirty and the other of eighty millions, were decreed, but they proved almost absolute failures. Necker then proposed, as the only hope, an extraordinary contribution, amounting to a fourth of the revenue of each citizen; but although this brought in something, it proved wholly inadequate. Bankruptcy, complete or partial, was spoken of, and there were abundant precedents for it in the monarchy. It has been calculated that the public faith had been violated no less than fifty-six times between Henry IV. and the Revolution.[1] But the Assembly protested strongly and earnestly against such a course, and it was as the one possible alternative, that it appropriated the ecclesiastical property and the domains of the Crown, compensating the clergy by salaries, and the King by a very liberal civil list.[2]

These are not the proceedings of a Legislature that was indifferent to the rights of property. It is true, however, that under the assemblies that followed, the prospect rapidly darkened. Enormous mob outrages unpunished and even uncensured; enormous and almost indiscriminate confiscations; laws of maximum regulating the prices of commodities; a forced paper

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[1] Taine, *L'Ancien Régime*, p. 105.

[2] Rabaut, *Précis de la Révolution*, pp. 195-199; Laferrière, pp. 37-49; Garet, pp. 177-233.

currency, reducing to a small fraction all ancient debts; forced loans; requisitions on the rich, and the plunder of all charitable, literary, or educational corporations, fill the later history of the Revolution; and much of the language of Robespierre and of some of his colleagues, as well as the conspiracy of Babœuf, show clearly the influence of the socialistic element. That element, however, proved transitory. It was never the most powerful, and the violence of civil war, the necessities of a country engaged in a desperate contest against foreign enemies, and the hatred of the rich as an anti-revolutionary class, inspired the violences of the Revolution much more than any deliberate negation of the legitimacy of private property. The codes of law that have sprung out of the Revolution recognised the sanctity of property and the stringency of contracts at least as fully as the codes of the ancient monarchy; and, contrary to the anticipations of Burke, the Revolution which has destroyed, enfeebled, or remodelled almost all French institutions, has not permanently injured either French credit, French industry, or French property.

The causes of this fact form a matter of curious and important inquiry, but the more prominent may, I think, be easily ascertained. On no other subject is the conservative sentiment so powerful and so sensitive as in the protection of property. On most political questions, great multitudes of quiet and moderate men exhibit an habitual languor, which too often enables fanatical minorities and dexterous leaders to carry measures that are quite opposed to the genuine sense of the majority of the nation; while many others throw their influence into great movements of change, with a careless and unreflecting levity they would never have displayed on any matter directly affecting their private interests. But when the rights of property are touched, these interests are at once alarmed. The indifference and the

levity in a great measure disappear, and an unwonted spirit of earnestness and caution is aroused. In France there was a strong bulwark of resistance in the great multitude of small owners of land. The extent to which peasant proprietors had already multiplied, seems to have been almost entirely unknown in England until the publication in 1792 of Arthur Young's Tour; and Burke, though in general singularly well-informed about the social condition of France, appears to have been altogether ignorant of it.[1] This class was still further strengthened by the great masses of Church and royal property thrown into the market at the Revolution, and by the extension of the law of equal division. At the same time, the sense of property among them was greatly intensified by the simplification of titles, which put an end to the confused, divided, and imperfect ownership growing out of the feudal system. The destruction of the feudal obligations, as it was actually accomplished, was in many instances an act of the most barefaced robbery. A crowd of money rights, which had been for ages sold and purchased under the full sanction of the law, and which had grown out of the most legitimate contracts, were swept away without compensation. But one of the results was the creation of a large class who, themselves enjoying absolute and

[1] I infer this not only from the silence of Burke, but also from his statement that 'the general circulation of property, and in particular the mutual convertibility of land into money, and of money into land,' was less in France than in England. In another passage of his *Reflections* he says that the comparative wealth of France was not only much inferior to that of England, but was also 'not so equal in the distribution, nor so ready in the circulation.' Henry Swinburne, who travelled from Bayonne to Marseilles in 1776, and published his travels in 1785, noticed the passion of the people of Bigorre for purchasing little plots of land out of their earnings, and their proneness to run into debt for that purpose.

undivided property, exhibited the instincts of proprietors in their utmost intensity. This class was much increased at a later period, by the wide diffusion of small portions of the obligations of the national debt. Revolutionary and anarchical doctrines relating to property have again and again risen to the surface, but the knowledge that an immense proportion of the French people are always ready, if the rights of property are seriously menaced, to throw themselves for protection into the arms of a military despotism, has hitherto proved a sufficient check upon socialistic tendencies in France.

In estimating the relations of the French Revolution to other countries, the language of Burke was much more moderate than it afterwards became. He admitted fully that the English party which sympathised with the Revolution was a small one, and one of the best known passages in the 'Reflections' is that contrasting the half-dozen grasshoppers which make the field ring with their importunate clink, with the herds of great cattle that chew the cud in silence under the shelter of the British Oak. He maintained, however, that the beginnings of disorder were very lately even more feeble in France. The world was in the presence of 'a revolution of sentiments, manners, and moral opinions,' and such a revolution could not be confined to one country. 'France has always more or less influenced manners in England; and when your fountain is choked up, the stream will not run long and not run clear with us, or perhaps with any nation.' 'Of all things Wisdom is the most terrified with epidemical fanaticism, because of all enemies it is that against which she is the least able to furnish any kind of resource.' It was idle to say that French affairs did not concern Englishmen, when they were steadily and persistently held up as a model. Nor was this a merely spontaneous and unforced admiration. One of the

characteristic features of the new French fanaticism was its proselytising spirit. 'They have societies to cabal and correspond at home and abroad, for the propagation of their tenets. The Republic of Berne, one of the happiest, the most prosperous, and the best governed countries upon earth, is one of the great objects at the destruction of which they aim. I am told they have in some measure succeeded in sowing there the seeds of discontent.[1] They are busy throughout Germany; Spain and Italy have not been untried. England is not left out of the comprehensive scheme of their malignant charity, and in England we find those who stretch out their arms to them.'

The abstract I have now given of the contents of the 'Reflections on the French Revolution' has extended to considerable, and I fear somewhat tedious, length, but it is not, I think, disproportioned to its historical importance. 'The first considerable check,' wrote the French writer Dumont, 'that was given to the general enthusiasm in the cause of the Revolution, came from the famous publication of Burke; when he attacked, himself entirely alone, the gigantic force of the Assembly, and represented these new legislators, in the midst of all their power and glory, as maniacs who could only destroy everything and produce nothing.' Very few books have ever combined so remarkably the wide and rapid popularity of a successful political pamphlet with the enduring influence of a standard political treatise. With the doubtful exception of Swift's 'Conduct of the Allies,' it had probably a greater immediate effect on political opinion than any other English work of the

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[1] Burke's statement about Berne is fully corroborated by Mallet du Pan, *Essai Historique sur la Destruction de la Ligue Helvétique*, ch. ii.

eighteenth century. With the exception of 'The Wealth of Nations,' no other English book of the eighteenth century has so deeply and permanently influenced the modes of thought of serious political thinkers. Within the year of its publication about 19,000 copies were sold in England and about 13,000 in France, and the number of English copies sold soon rose to 30,000. It became the main topic of conversation in every political circle, and it rarely failed to produce violent feelings either of admiration or dislike.

In the upper circles, both in England and on the Continent, it was, in general, received with unbounded enthusiasm. The King spoke of it with the warmest admiration, and himself distributed several copies; and messages or letters of approval soon poured in to the author from the sovereigns assembled at Pilnitz, from Catherine of Russia, from Stanislaus of Poland, from the French Princes, from some of the leading members of the French clergy. His own University of Dublin conferred on Burke an honorary degree; an address expressive of admiration was presented to him by the graduates of Oxford; and among the many private persons who warmly applauded the work were Gibbon and Reynolds. In Whig circles, however, a deep division of opinion was already shown. The Duke of Portland, Lord Fitzwilliam, the Duke of Devonshire, Lord John Cavendish, Montagu, and several other members of the old Rockingham connection, expressed their full approbation of the principles of the work, and among younger men Sir Gilbert Elliot was emphatic on the same side. On the other hand Fox, Sheridan, Francis, Erskine, and Grey, regarded the work with unconcealed dislike. Fox not only expressed in private his entire disapprobation of it, but even declared that in point of composition it was the worst which Burke

had ever produced;[1] and as early as December 1790 Sir Gilbert Elliot clearly saw in the leaning of Fox towards Sheridan and in his alienation from Burke the sign of the approaching disruption of the Whig party.[2] In the Radical party there was a moment of consternation, and it was noticed that the attendance at the revolutionary clubs for a time greatly fell off, but a host of pens were soon employed in answering Burke. Among his opponents were Priestley, Price, Mrs. Macaulay, and Mary Wollstonecraft, but the only answers which made any considerable impression were the 'Vindiciæ Gallicæ,' which was the earliest and one of the best works of Mackintosh, and the 'Rights of Man,' which was the most popular work of Paine.

But though the subject was rapidly becoming the main topic of political discussion in the country, it was still kept in a great degree out of Parliament. As we have already seen, in the early session of 1790 it was not Burke but Fox who had introduced it, and the one great speech in which Burke had stated his views on the subject, cannot be accused of recklessness or violence. Parliament was dissolved in the autumn of 1790, and the new Parliament met on November 25. In the short session between its first meeting and the Christmas holidays, no allusion appears to have been made to French affairs. The difficulties with Spain and with Tippoo Sahib were the chief subjects of discussion, and Fox, Burke, and Pitt contended side by side, and with triumphant ability, for the doctrine that

[1] See a letter of Burke, in Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 365-368, and Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 171, 172. In the famous debate on May 6, 1791, Fox said that as soon as Burke's book on the French Revolution was published, 'he condemned that book both in public and private, and every one of the doctrines it contained.' *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 389.

[2] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 368-370.

the impeachment of Hastings was not terminated by a dissolution.

This impeachment and the French Revolution now almost equally divided the attention of Burke. From the time when the events of October 5 and 6, 1789, had made the French King a virtual prisoner in the hands of the democracy, the movement of revolution had been advancing with terrible energy towards its goal. The National Assembly as well as the King had been transferred from Versailles to Paris, and it was now exposed to the ceaseless intimidation of the clubs and of the mob. Soon after the outrageous scenes of October 5 and 6, nearly three hundred of the most respectable members, including Mounier, Lally Tollendal, and the Bishop of Langres, seceded in disgust, and power fell more and more into the most violent hands. Measure after measure was pushed on with a feverish haste, blotting out all the institutions, traditions, and characteristics of ancient France. The privileges enjoyed by particular provinces in matters of taxation had been already abolished, but now the ancient divisions of the provinces, with their names, laws, organisations, usages, customs, and infinite diversities of administration, were all swept away. The whole country was reorganised on a plan of perfect uniformity in eighty-three departments, divided symmetrically into districts, cantons, and municipalities, governed by an entirely new set of administrative and judicial institutions. Functionaries of almost every order were made elective, and the basis of the whole fabric was an electoral body comprising all Frenchmen, except domestics, who were twenty-five years of age, who had resided in one district for a year, and who paid direct taxation to the value of three days' labour. The old Parliaments, which had for centuries played so great a part in French history, were destroyed. The judges were made tem-

porary and elective. The clergy, who had shown themselves imbued with the liberal ideas of the age to a degree which those who know the spirit of their successors find it difficult to realise; who had so readily abandoned their privileges in taxation; who had been the first of the privileged orders to join the commons in the States-General; and who, by the mouth of the Archbishop of Paris, had consented with signal generosity to the abolition of their tithes, soon found that they had gained nothing by their policy. They ceased to be a separate corporation in the State. Their Church property was seized and sold, and they were reduced to the position of mere salaried functionaries. The monasteries were abolished. Monastic vows were forbidden, and soon the 'civil constitution' drove the clergy to the alternative of abandoning either their cures or their allegiance to the Pope.

This measure was not, it is true, altogether unprecedented in its general character, for it bore a striking resemblance to the legislation of Joseph II. in Austria. The State by its own authority diminished the number of bishoprics, rearranged the dioceses in accordance with the new division of departments, made the bishops and curés eligible by the same electors as the members of the National Assembly, forbade the newly elected bishops to demand their confirmation from the Pope, and finally exacted from the clergy an oath of adhesion to a constitution which was directly opposed to the principles of their Church. Out of 138 bishops only four consented to take it. Out of 70,000 priests 46,000 were deprived of their cures,[1] and a great schism divided France. The nobles had lost their privileges, their political power, and their feudal revenues. It was decreed that there should be no longer any distinction of

[1] Taine, *Hist. de la Révolution*, i. 237, 238.

orders in France, and all titles were forbidden. The great commercial companies were dissolved, and the first steps were taken in the legislation for the equal division of successions.

The moral authority of the King had been totally destroyed by successful revolts, and although the Assembly sincerely desired to maintain the monarchical constitution of the Government, it had left him scarcely a shadow of his influence. He was deprived of almost all patronage, of all initiative in legislation, of the right of pardon, of the right of dissolving the Assembly. His ministers were excluded from the Assembly, and superseded in their chief administrative functions by committees appointed by it. The King could only declare peace or war in accordance with its decrees. His veto on its proceedings was limited to two Legislatures. At the same time the condemnation of the hereditary principle and the destruction of all the natural bulwarks of the throne had made him a manifest anomaly in the State,[1] while the disorganisation of the regular army and the creation of a great democratic force wholly independent of the Crown had deprived him of every element of power. Even the right of commanding the army had passed into the hands of the new municipal bodies.[2]

[1] 'Corporations which have a perpetual succession, and hereditary noblesse who themselves exist by succession, are the true guardians of monarchical succession. On such orders and institutions alone an hereditary monarchy can stand. Where all things are elective, you may call a king hereditary, but he is for the present a cipher; and the succession is not supported by any analogy in the State, nor combined with any sentiments whatsoever existing in the minds of the people. It is a solitary, unsupported, anomalous thing. Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 212. 'To think of the possibility of the existence of a permanent and hereditary royalty where nothing else is hereditary or permanent in point either of personal or corporate dignity, is a ruinous chimera.' 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies.' Burke's *Works*, vii. 130.

[2] Sybel, pp. 92, 127, 128.

It is strange to look back and remember how lately the Sovereign, who was now so impotent, had been, in the eyes of the law and of the people, the absolute ruler of France, the sole initiator of legislation, the sole source of political power. The States-General could only be convened by his free will, and he was fully authorised by the precedents of French history to regard them as a mere consultative body which had no legislative power except by his concession. As late as the end of 1788 Necker in his report to the King had declared that 'it would never enter into the mind of the Third Estate to diminish the seigneurial and honorary prerogatives that distinguish the first two orders in their properties and their persons.' In the royal declaration of June 23, 1789, the King had formally announced that all properties without exception must be respected, and that under the name of property were comprised tithes and all the feudal and seigneurial rights and obligations, all the useful and honorary prerogatives, attached to lands or fiefs or belonging to persons. The complex and balanced Constitution of the States-General, as it had existed in 1614, seemed to contain ample guarantees that the change from an absolute to a representative Government would proceed with a measured and orderly course. Under such a Constitution the new Assembly would be like one of those engines which are intended to descend by a steep declivity from the mountain to the plain, and are furnished with elaborate and powerful machinery to regulate and moderate their course. But the rope had snapped. The springs had broken. The whole machinery of control had given way, and it was now hurrying on with a speed which no power could check. The Third Order had dominated and absorbed the two others. The Assembly, which was convoked to give a moral support to the Crown, had destroyed the royal

prerogatives; it had set aside the instructions of its constituents; it had by its own will prolonged its tenure of power; it had usurped the whole authority, it had transformed the whole political character of the State.

All the old orders, corporations, tribunals, customs, checks and counterpoises, heterogeneous and complex forms of administration that had surrounded and restricted the most absolute sovereigns, had in a few months been swept away by the resistless energy of one democratic chamber, and all compromise and partition of power had been rejected. It was in vain that the King at the very outset of the movement had agreed to accord to the States-General the functions of a complete legislative body, with annual meetings and a complete control of the purse; it was in vain that the nobles had formally renounced their exemptions from taxation, had welcomed the opening to all classes of the higher grades in the army, and had shown themselves on August 4 perfectly willing to abandon one class of their feudal rights and to accept a reasonable commutation for the rest; it was in vain that the clergy had abandoned all their privileges relating to taxation, had consented to the entire abolition of their tithes, and had offered to raise a loan of 400 millions for the State, if their other property was maintained. All this, together with a complete system of provincial self-government, might have been obtained without violence or revolution, but all this proved insufficient. In a few months the institutions, traditions, and governing maxims of centuries had been overthrown. In the total destruction of the political power of the King, of the privileged orders, of the Parliaments, and of all provincial corporations, authority seemed wholly concentrated in one great, unmanageable assembly; but behind that assembly were the Jacobin clubs, which were multiplying rapidly in every part of France; the Paris mobs, which were

threatening the more moderate deputies, and shrieking their orders from the galleries of the Assembly; the new elective and almost independent councils of inexperienced men, which were springing up in every part of France, pushed on by fierce democratic passions and burning to realise the conceptions of Rousseau.

Much, however, was done by the Constituent Assembly which was of great and permanent value, and which has remained unchanged through all the fluctuations of French Governments. The abolition of the feudal system with its manifold and intolerable abuses proved the first condition of the prosperity of France. The laws which abolished all religious disqualifications and all exemptions from taxation, which opened all civil and military employments to all Frenchmen, which emancipated trade and industry and labour from the countless restrictions and monopolies that encumbered them, and which remitted some of the taxes that were most wasteful, and most oppressive to the poor, were measures of incontestable value. The Assembly was full of able lawyers, and its reforms in the judicial institutions were of great importance, and carried out some of the chief recommendations of Voltaire and Beccaria. The scandalous abuses of the sale of judicial as of other offices, the infinite variety and complexity of the administration of justice in the different provinces, the exceptional tribunals by which the King could withdraw cases from the ordinary law courts, the shameful privileges which gave the upper orders lighter penalties for crime, all disappeared. The same system of law was now established through the whole of France, and it was enacted that all privilege in matters of jurisdiction should cease, and that all citizens without distinction should plead before the same tribunals and in the same form, and should be liable to the same penalties. The admirable institution of the 'juge de paix' greatly diminished

litigation. Juries were introduced into criminal cases. It was provided that the reasons of every judgment should be fully set forth. Confiscation of goods, and penalties inflicting degradation on the family of the culprit, were abolished. Corporal punishment was no longer admitted into the military code.

It is idle to question the value of these reforms, but many of them might easily have been attained without revolution, and the others were dearly purchased by the fatal enfeeblement of the great pillars of order in the State. Through the whole country anarchy was rapidly spreading, and it was anarchy intensified by famine. The revolt of the peasants against the nobles, which seemed for a time to have diminished, broke out again with redoubled violence. From almost all parts of France came accounts of the plunder and destruction of country houses; of the refusal of peasants to pay rents or any of those feudal dues which the Assembly had reserved for future compensation; of fierce conflicts between the supporters of the old and new order of things; of the revival of ancient feuds and passions, and the total destruction of order and subordination. The events of the last months had spread a vague and unwonted agitation through classes which had very rarely been touched by any political emotion, and the French peasants were now as passionate supporters of the Revolution as any of the worshippers of the 'Contrat Social.' For forms of government and speculative politics they cared nothing, but they hated tithes; they hated the feudal system with an intensity which neither the privileged classes nor the literary politicians had ever understood, and their instinct of acquisition was aroused to the utmost. They had seen with astonishment a great part of their burdens suddenly removed. They were told that the feudal system was abolished, and they were resolved that like the system of tithes it

should be abolished absolutely and without compensation. The Revolution in their eyes meant simply the cessation of all the dues and services to which they were liable, and with the complete destruction of the institutions and customs under which they had grown up, all their landmarks of authority and of morals had disappeared. The landed gentry were for the most part ruined, and multitudes were flying persecuted and panic-stricken to seek shelter in the towns or in foreign lands. In the beginning of 1790 six thousand estates were said to have been in the market, and they could find no purchasers.[1] The great emigration of the nobles had already begun. Some had gone with the Prince de Condé in July and many others after October 6, and it was already known that a large party were imploring foreign princes and especially the German Emperor to take arms for the restoration of the monarchy of France.

In November 1790 Morris wrote to Washington: 'The country I now inhabit, on which so many other countries depend, having sunk to absolute nothingness, has deranged the general state of things in every quarter. . . . This unhappy country, bewildered in the pursuit of metaphysical whimsies, presents to our moral view a mighty ruin. . . . The Sovereign humbled to the level of a beggar's pity, without resources, without authority, without a friend. The Assembly at once a master and a slave, new in power, wild in theory, raw in practice. It engrosses all functions though incapable of exercising any, and has taken from this fierce, ferocious people every restraint of religion and of respect. Sole executors of the law, and therefore supreme judges of its propriety, each district measures out its obedience by its wishes, and the great interests of the whole, split up into fractional morsels, depend on momentary impulse

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[1] *Annual Register*, 1790, p. 121.

and ignorant caprice. Such a state of things cannot last. But how will it end? . . . One thing only seems to be tolerably ascertained—that the glorious opportunity is lost, and (for this time at least) the Revolution has failed. . . . But I think from the chaos of opinion and the conflict of its jarring elements a new order will at length arise which, though in some degree the child of chance, may not be less productive of human happiness than the forethought provisions of human speculation.'[1]

The enthusiasm of the English admirers of the French Revolution was, however, still unqualified, and they admired it with no mere speculative or Platonic devotion. It was as a lesson to Englishmen that Price and Priestley especially praised it, and Mackintosh declared that the one point on which its friends and enemies were agreed, was that its influence could not be confined to France, but must produce important changes in the general state of Europe.[2] This brilliant, conscientious, and on most subjects moderate writer, did not hesitate to say that though 'the grievances of England did not at present justify a change by violence,' 'they were in a rapid progress to that fatal state,' and he declared that, 'whatever may be the ultimate fate of the French Revolutionists, the friends of freedom must ever consider them as the authors of the greatest attempt that has hitherto been made in the cause of man.'[3] By far the most popular answer to Burke was Paine's 'Rights of Man,' of which the first part was published in the beginning of 1791, and this work was throughout a comparison of the French and English theories of government, to the infinite advantage of the former. Burke, Paine said, had done real service in exhuming

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[1] Morris's *Works*, ii. 115–119. [2] *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, p. 358.
[3] Ibid. p. 352.

the servile language of the authors of the Revolution of 1688, for he had shown how little the rights of men were then understood, and how absurdly the English Revolution had been overrated. It would now, however, soon find its level. 'It is already on the wane, eclipsed by the enlarging orb of reason and the luminous Revolutions of America and France.' The time would soon come when 'mankind would scarcely believe that a country calling itself free would send to Holland for a man and clothe him with power, on purpose to put themselves in fear of him, and give him almost a million sterling a year for leave to submit themselves and their posterity like bondmen and bondwomen for ever.' 'Everything,' he continues, 'in the English Government appears to me the reverse of what it ought to be,' and he proceeded to show how the true model for Englishmen was the new French Constitution, and to contrast its provisions, clause by clause, with the corruption and injustice of the English one.

In France, he says, every man who pays a tax of sixty sous a year has a vote; the number of representatives bears a fixed ratio to the number of electors; the National Assembly is to be elected every two years; game laws and monopolies are abolished; no member of the National Assembly is suffered to be an officer of the Government, a placeman, or pensioner; the right of making peace or war has been taken from the King and vested with the nation; all titles and other aristocratic privileges have been extinguished; tithes have been put an end to; liberty of conscience has been established, not as a matter of toleration but as of universal right; and while the King is still retained as an official, the sole sovereignty of the nation itself has been fully and formally acknowledged. 'Much is to be learned from the French Constitution. Conquest and tyranny transplanted themselves with William

the Conqueror from Normandy into England, and the country is yet disfigured with the marks. May, then, the example of all France contribute to regenerate a freedom which a province of it destroyed.' 'From the Revolutions of America and France and the symptoms that have appeared in other countries, it is evident that the opinion of the world is changing with respect to systems of government. . . . All the old Governments have received a shock from the revolutions that already appear, and which were once more improbable, and are a greater subject of wonder, than a general revolution in Europe would be now. When we survey the wretched condition of man under the monarchical and hereditary systems of government . . . it becomes evident that those systems are bad, and that a general revolution in the principle and construction of Governments is necessary.'[1]

Such was the character of the work which the Revolution Society was zealously disseminating. The leaven was rapidly spreading. Early in 1791 there was a branch society established at Norwich, and another, which was especially active in disseminating the works of Paine, at Manchester. The London society hired Ranelagh for the celebration of the anniversary of the French Confederation in July, and it was announced that Sheridan would be present. A flag had been sent from France to be used on the occasion, in which the national colours of France and England were blended, but as it was composed of contraband materials it was seized in the Custom House.[2] The addresses of the Revolution Society to the French patriots continued in a strain of the most devoted enthusiasm. 'The admiration,' they said in April 1791, 'with which you

[1] *Rights of Man*, part i.

[2] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, i. 379; Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 398.

Frenchmen have long beheld the British Government has, we believe, arisen from your having hitherto contemplated with more attention the excellencies of our Constitution than its defects; a moderate portion of political freedom and the existence of bearable oppressions appeared to you an enviable condition.' 'Royal prerogatives,' they wrote a few months later, 'injurious to the public interest; a servile peerage; a rapacious and intolerant clergy; and a corrupt representation, are grievances under which we suffer, but as you perhaps have profited from the example of our ancestors, so shall we from your late glorious and splendid actions.'[1]

To Burke, on the other hand, the dangers of the Revolution as a centre of malefic contagion appeared continually more terrible, and he soon began to change his first opinion of the military impotence to which France had been reduced. It is remarkable, too, and I think melancholy, to observe how entirely he shared the hopes and wishes of the French emigrants, and looked forward to European intervention in favour of the King. Turin was a great centre of the French emigration, and in a letter to the English Minister at that city, written as early as January 1791, he clearly stated his views on the subject. He urged that nothing could be effected in France without a great force from abroad; that the predominant faction was undoubtedly the strongest, and not likely to be overturned by internal resistance. 'Nothing else,' he emphatically added, 'but a foreign force can or will do. In this design too Great Britain and Prussia must at least acquiesce. Nor is it a small military force that can do the business. It is a serious design, and must be done with combined strength. Nor must that strength be under any ordinary conduct. It will require as much political manage-

[1] Smyth's *Lectures on the French Revolution*, iii. 36.

ment as military skill in the commanders. 'France is weak, indeed, divided and deranged; but God knows when the things came to be tried, whether the invaders would not find that the enterprise was not to support a party but to conquer a kingdom. . . . Every hour any system of government continues, be that system what it will, the more it obtains consistency, and the better will it be able to provide for its own support. . . . If the Powers who may be disposed to think, as I most seriously do, that no monarchy, limited or unlimited, nor any of the old republics can possibly be safe as long as this strange, nameless, wild, enthusiastic thing is established in the centre of Europe, may not be in readiness to act in concert, and with all their forces—if this be the case, to be sure nothing is to be attempted but the preluding war of paper. For my part, I am entirely in the dark about the designs and means of the Powers of Europe in this respect. However, this I am quite sure of, all the other policy is childish play in comparison. . . . Theoretic plans of constitution have been the bane of France, and I am satisfied that nothing can possibly do it any real service but to establish it upon all its ancient bases. Till that is done, one man's speculation will appear as good as another's.'[1]

In a letter written about the same time, apparently to a lady in attendance on the Queen of France, he expressed similar views with equal energy. 'I feel,' he wrote, 'as an Englishman great dread and apprehension from the contagious nature of these abominable principles and vile manners, which threaten the worst and most degrading barbarism to every adjacent country. No argument can persuade me that if they are suffered finally to triumph in France, they will want more than the occasion of some domestic trouble or disturbance

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 182-186.

. . . to extend themselves to us, and to blast all the health and vigour of that happy Constitution which we enjoy. . . : You have an armed tyranny to deal with, and nothing but arms can pull it down.'[1]

It was not in the nature of Burke to conceal views which he strongly held, and in February 1791 he publicly stated them in his 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly.' In this pamphlet he emphatically declared that no country could be secure while there was established in the centre of Europe 'a State (if so it may be called) founded on principles of anarchy, and which is in reality a college of armed fanatics.' The creed of Mohammed, he maintained, in the first days of its fierce and proselytising fanaticism was not a more necessary danger to the Christian communities about it, than this new and revolutionary State to the settled Governments of Europe. Nothing but a force from without would be sufficient to quell it. 'The princes of Europe in the beginning of this century did well not to suffer the monarchy of France to swallow up the others. They ought not now, in my opinion, to suffer all the monarchies and commonwealths to be swallowed up in the gulf of this polluted anarchy. They may be tolerably safe at present, because the comparative power of France for the present is little. But times and occasions make dangers. Intestine troubles may arise in other countries.' If the King of Prussia was justified in interfering to save Holland from confusion, much more would he be justified in employing the same power to rescue a virtuous monarch dethroned by traitors and rebels.

Burke, at the same time, entirely disclaimed all desire to see the English Constitution established in France. All reformation in a State, he contended, should be based upon existing materials, and the tra-

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 192, 193.

ditions and ancient constitution of the estates in France, the circumstances of the country, and the state of its property pointed to a form of government essentially different from that prevailing in England. Nor was the English Constitution one which could be easily or safely imitated. It was 'a much more subtle and artificial combination of parts and powers than people were generally aware of,' and depended very largely for its efficacy on restraints, limitations, understandings, and customs which are not to be found in the statute book. 'The parts of our Constitution have gradually and almost insensibly, in a long course of time, accommodated themselves to each other and to their common as well as their separate purposes.' It was, however, in the opinion of Burke a total mistake to suppose that political liberty of any kind can be, or ought to be, possessed by all nations, and he greatly doubted whether France was ripe for it. 'Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites . . . in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, in preference to the flattery of knaves. Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.'

Fox, in a private letter, spoke of the recommendation in this pamphlet of 'a general war for the purpose of destroying the present Government of France' as 'mere madness;'[1] and it greatly accelerated the breach. It is remarkable, however, that in Parliament the provocation still came steadily from Fox. On April 8,

[1] Fox's *Correspondence*, ii. 363.

1791, in a debate on the Quebec Government Bill, when Burke was not present, Fox expressed his delight at the enlightened principles of freedom which were now advancing rapidly over a considerable part of the globe; and with an evident allusion to the treatise of Burke, ridiculed the alleged attempt of the ministers to revive in Canada that 'spirit of chivalry' which had fallen into disgrace in the neighbouring country. On the 15th, in a debate on the Russian armament, he again most gratuitously introduced the subject, declaring that he 'admired the new Constitution of France, considered altogether, as the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty which had been erected on the foundation of human integrity in any time or country.'[1] Burke at once, with much visible emotion, rose to reply, but it was the end of a long debate, and the cries of 'Question,' chiefly from his own side of the House, were so loud that he was forced to resume his seat.

It was tolerably certain that the division was too serious to be closed. It was impossible that Burke, with his position in the Whig party, with his opinions of the French Revolution, and after the writings he had published, could acquiesce by his silence in the language of the leader of his party. There was a slight skirmish between the two leaders on April 21, in the course of which Burke, while speaking with much courtesy, uttered a most significant warning: 'Should it happen,' he said, 'as he hoped would not be the case, that he and his right honourable friend differed from each other on principles of government, he desired it to be recollected that, however dear he considered his friendship, there was something still dearer to his mind—the love of his country.'[2]

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 105–107, 249.
[2] Ibid. xxix. 363.

It was not, however, till the strange, disorderly, and passionate sitting of May 6, that the breach was fully consummated. The subject, which was the proposed new Constitution for Canada, seemed at first sight wholly unconnected with the French Revolution, but Burke privately informed Fox that he intended to make use of this occasion to express his views upon French affairs. The question being the nature of the Constitution to be given to a French province under English dominion, a comparison of French and English ideas of government appeared to him not irrelevant, and he also selected the occasion because the House being in committee, each member had a right to speak as often as he pleased.[1] Fox called upon Burke, and endeavoured without success to induce him at least to postpone the discussion till a later period. Burke urged the extreme importance of the subject; the manner in which it had been already more than once introduced into Parliament; the impossibility that he could, with his opinions, and after the part which he had taken, suffer the doctrines that had been propounded to pass unchallenged; the improbability of any equally favourable opportunity of expressing his views occurring during the present session of Parliament. The two statesmen entered largely into the question, and Burke stated fully and particularly the grounds of his opinions; the plan of his intended speech; the limits which he meant to impose upon himself. Neither party convinced the other, but there was no quarrel, and they walked together to the House still conversing amicably on the subject.

This interview took place on April 21.[1] The Quebec

[1] *Annual Register*, 1791. See, too, Burke's *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*. The intention of Burke was soon known. Windham mentions (*Diary*, p. 223) that on the 22nd he had an angry discussion with Sir Gilbert Elliot on the subject.

Bill was postponed till after the Easter holidays, and when on May 6 the House went into committee, Burke opened the debate by a speech on the rights of man as illustrated by the Constitutions of Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, and soon launched into an elaborate dissertation upon the measures and principles now prevailing in France, and upon the enormous dangers they threatened to England. 'If,' he said, 'the French Revolutionists were to mind their own affairs, and had shown no inclination to go abroad and to make proselytes, neither he nor any other member of the House would have had any right to meddle with them,' but they showed as much zeal in making proselytes as Lewis XIV. in making conquests.

It was soon evident that his own party were anxious that he should not be heard. At least seven times he was called to order,[1] and at last Lord Sheffield formally moved that a discussion of the French Constitution when the House was in committee on the Quebec Bill was out of order. Pitt, however, after being more than once appealed to, interposed, and supported the contention of

[1] Lord Sidmouth was accustomed to relate a strange, characteristic incident in this debate, which is not mentioned in the *Parl. Hist.* As long as the interruptions came from the leaders of the party, Burke bore them with tolerable composure, but when the lesser lights ventured to treat him in the same way, he broke out in the words of Lear, 'The little dogs and all —Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart: see, they bark at me.' Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 85. It is noticed in the account in the *Annual Register*, which was evidently drawn up under Burke's eye, that the interruptions all came from his own side, and it is plain that they were premeditated, for on April 21 Mr. Taylor had announced that he would call anyone to order who, in considering the Quebec Bill, entered into a discussion of the constitutions of other countries. Compare *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 360 and Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii 149. Burke evidently attributed the interruptions to Fox, but Fox very emphatically repudiated the imputation. *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 391.

Burke that a discussion of the general principles on which political power should be based was germane to a consideration of the new Constitution to be established in Canada, though he added that as a matter of discretion he greatly wished that French politics had not been introduced into the debate. But Fox, in his reply, completely threw away the scabbard. He dilated with keen irony upon the disorderly character of the speech of Burke, who, he said, was manifestly seeking to force on a quarrel with 'his nearest and dearest friend' by introducing a subject which was totally alien to a detailed examination of the clauses of the Quebec Bill, and who had selected as the occasion for that quarrel a time when his friend had been 'grossly misrepresented and traduced' as a Republican. For his part he refused to countenance such an irregularity as a discussion of the French Constitution in a committee on the Quebec Bill. If such a discussion continued he would leave the House. At the same time he had no hesitation in repeating his former statement, that he considered the French Revolution, 'on the whole, one of the most glorious events in the history of mankind.' He accused Burke of abandoning the principles of his whole life, and especially those which he held during the American Revolution; and he pronounced his recent writings and speeches to be libels on the British Constitution, which was founded, like the new Constitution in France, on the rights of man. He had said more, he added, than he intended, possibly more than was wise and proper; but the ministerial side of the House had encouraged this discussion apparently in order to elicit his views. It was very unnecessary, as he never concealed them. On the French Revolution his opinions and those of his right honourable friend 'were wide as the poles asunder.'

The sequel of the debate has been often told. Burke

began his reply in slow, grave, and measured tones, but rose at last into a perfect tempest of passion. He had not introduced the topic of the French Revolution into Parliament; he had spoken only after repeated provocation, and he now complained bitterly of the virulence of the attacks of one who had for twenty-two years been his intimate friend; of the charges of something like treachery that were brought against him, though he had fully and fairly warned his opponent of his determination to raise this discussion; of the persistent and organised attempts to prevent him from being heard—attempts which seemed doubly ungrateful, as he had himself, during the twenty-six years of his parliamentary life, never called a member to order. He repeated that the discussion of a new Constitution to be provided for a portion of the British Empire, was a proper occasion for examining the principles on which Constitutions should be framed, and he persisted in the strain of argument that had been denounced. He expatiated with passionate eloquence on the revolutionary doctrines that were now industriously propagated by clubs and papers; the perpetual comparison of the Constitutions of England and France, to the disparagement of the former; the active correspondence established between English demagogues and French revolutionists; the enormous aggravation of the danger when French principles were countenanced and eulogised by the leader of one of the great parties in the State. He had on several previous occasions differed from Fox, but no such differences had ever for a moment interrupted their friendship. He now knew that he stood in Parliament isolated and unsupported, and that he was sacrificing his oldest friendship at an age when friendships could not be replaced. But the call of public duty was imperative, and if it was with his last breath he would say, 'Fly from the French Constitution.' At this point Fox

interposed and whispered, 'There is no loss of friends.' 'Yes,' Burke fiercely rejoined, 'there is a loss of friends; I know the price of my conduct. Our friendship is at an end.'

It was but too true. Fox, over whose healthy, affectionate, and not very profound nature political passions never acquired the fierce and undivided empire they obtained in Burke, had now but one wish—to appease the quarrel. As he rose to answer, the tears trickled down his cheeks. For some moments he was unable to speak, and men who were but too apt to look on the conflicts of party as they looked on those of the cock pit or the prize ring, were moved to an unwonted emotion by the pathos of the scene. 'It was painful,' he said in beginning a most admirable and temperate defence of his views, 'painful to be unkindly treated by those to whom they felt the greatest obligations, and who, notwithstanding their harshness, they must still love and esteem. He could not forget that when little more than a boy he had received favours from his right honourable friend, that their friendship had grown with their years, that it had continued for upwards of twenty-five years, and that for the last twenty years they had acted together and lived on terms of the most familiar intimacy. He hoped that, notwithstanding what had happened, his right honourable friend would think on those past times, and however any imprudent or intemperate words might have offended him, it would show that he had not been intentionally in fault.' Much more was said in the same strain, but the language of conciliation had no longer any influence on Burke. The prophetic fury, whether of inspiration or possession, was upon him, and that night closed a friendship which was one of the most memorable in English history. The two statesmen met and co-operated in the impeachment of Hastings, and they sometimes conversed amicably

together;[1] but the breach was never healed, and the Whig party for at least a generation was shattered by their quarrel.[2] A trivial incident which took place at the close of the sitting illustrated but too plainly the morbid excitement under which Burke was labouring. It was a wet night, and he asked a member, whose carriage was standing near, to set him down at his house. As they drove they began to speak on the question that had been discussed, but when Burke discovered that his friend had French sympathies he seized the check string in a fury and was with difficulty restrained from descending into the rain. When the carriage at length arrived at his house, he hurried out without speaking a word, nor did he ever renew his acquaintance.[3]

It seemed as though the victory lay with Fox. The newspapers of the party in general assailed Burke with great bitterness as a deserter—a charge which must have been especially painful to one who more than any other living man had dwelt upon the importance and the obligation of party discipline. In the debate on May 6 the interruptions appear to have all come from his own party, and no member of that party openly supported him, nor did any yet follow him in his secession. In a

[1] In a letter to his son dated Feb. 19, 1792, Burke said: 'As to opposition, and my relation to them, things remain nearly as they were; no approximation on the part of Fox to me, or of me to him, or to or from any of his people, except general civility, when seldom we meet. I never stay in the House to hear any debates, much less to divide on any question. On the affair of Hastings we converse just as we did. Fox sitting by me at Hastings's trial, spoke to me about the business of the Catholics of Ireland, and expressed himself, as I thought he would, very strongly in their favour; but with little hopes of anything being done.' Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 415.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* See, too, the excellent account in the *Annual Register*, 1791.

[3] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 154, 155.

debate a few days later Fox guarded himself against the imputation of republicanism by a speech, which has been quoted in a former chapter,[1] strongly asserting the necessity of a monarchical and aristocratic element in a well-constituted State, while Burke spoke of himself in melancholy terms as excluded from and disgraced by his party. This language was hardly exaggerated, for a few days after the rupture the 'Morning Chronicle,' which was known to represent especially the opinions of Fox, contained the following paragraph: 'The great and firm body of the Whigs in England, true to their principles, have decided on the dispute between Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke, and the former is declared to have maintained the pure doctrines by which they are bound together and upon which they have invariably acted. The consequence is that Mr. Burke retires from Parliament.'[2]

Scarcely a year, however, had passed when all this was changed. The signs of discontent and division began to multiply rapidly in the Whig party, and at length in 1794 a great portion of it adopted the principles of Burke and seceded openly from Fox. Public opinion warmly supported them, and the minority which adhered to Fox became one of the weakest and most discredited oppositions ever known in England.

The position of Burke for some time after his quarrel with Fox was very painful and isolated. The impeachment of Hastings still occupied much of his thoughts, but in addition to Fox he was now much alienated from Francis, with whom this impeachment had brought him into close contact, and for whom he seems to have entertained a warm respect. Francis, who had seen part of Burke's book on the French Revolution before its publication, had expressed his strong disapprobation

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[1] P. 55. [2] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 169.

in letters of very powerful and skilful criticism, and as time rolled on he identified himself closely with Fox and with the democratic section of the party.[1]

Burke himself now seldom appeared in Parliament. Much has been said of the extreme horror of reform which the French Revolution produced in his mind, but on this subject there is some prevalent exaggeration. His opposition to parliamentary reform, as we have already seen, dates from a much earlier period, and although he undoubtedly now thought that the main danger was not, as at the beginning of the reign, from royal influence but from democratic innovation; although he was now strongly opposed to any measures in favour of the Dissenters, and especially the Unitarians, which might either furnish a precedent for attacks against the Church or strengthen the political power of the partisans of the Revolution, there was still a large class of questions on which he was an earnest reformer. He spoke powerfully in favour of the abolition of the slave trade. He advocated the abolition of imprisonment for debt, and he threw himself with great ardour and effect into the movement for the relief of the Irish Catholics. One of the causes with which he had especially identified himself in his early life, now triumphed with general concurrence. The Bill which he had framed in 1771 giving juries jurisdiction in cases of libel was revived by Fox in 1791 with very slight alterations, and was carried with scarcely any opposition. Fox had himself opposed this measure when it

[1] See Parkes and Merivale's *Life of Francis*, ii. 453. In those very acute notes in which Francis delineated some of his contemporaries, he says, after describing Fox: 'I would have much sooner trusted Edmund Burke with the posthumous care of my name and reputation, though from 1791 we had been almost entirely disunited after a real friendship and intimacy of many years; because I am sure that if he had undertaken the task he would have performed it heartily and *bonâ fide*.'

had been previously introduced, and it is remarkable that in taking up the question he appears to have made no acknowledgment whatever of the previous services of Burke, who treated the neglect with a disdainful silence.

Burke did not join Pitt, and his relations to the Whig party were very ambiguous. In his 'Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs' he not only defended with triumphant power the consistency of his own political career, but also continued the line of argument which he had pursued in his 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' showing that the original doctrines of the Whigs of 1688 were essentially opposed to the new French maxims. From the words of the Declaration of Rights and of the Act of Settlement; from the language of Somers; from the speeches of the managers of the impeachment of Sacheverell, when the Whig doctrine of resistance was defined and elaborated with special care by the most accredited lawyers and statesmen of the party, he showed that according to the original Whig theory the English Crown was in no sense elective, but was a limited and hereditary monarchy settled in one family by a stringent, permanent contract, which was equally binding on the ruler and on the subjects. He showed that the English Revolution was justified only on the ground that the Sovereign had broken his contract, and that no other means were left for the recovery, maintenance, and security of the ancient Constitution, and that those who made it took the utmost pains to restrict it within these limits, and to avoid giving the smallest countenance to the doctrine that had prevailed during the Commonwealth, of the inalienable right of nations to change their Government when they pleased. 'Resistance,' said Walpole, 'ought never to be thought of but when an utter subversion of the laws of the realm threatens the whole frame of our

Constitution, and no redress can otherwise be hoped for. It therefore does, and ought for ever to stand in the eye and letter of the law as the highest offence.' 'In no case,' said Sir Joseph Jekyll, 'can resistance be lawful but in case of extreme necessity and when the Constitution cannot otherwise be preserved; and such necessity ought to be plain and obvious to the sense and judgment of the whole nation, and this was the case at the Revolution.' 'Neither the few nor the many,' wrote Burke, 'have a right to act merely by their will in any matter connected with duty, trust, engagement or obligation. The Constitution of a country being once settled upon some compact, tacit or expressed, there is no power existing of force to alter it without the breach of the covenant or the consent of all the parties. Such is the nature of a contract. And the votes of a majority of the people, whatever their infamous flatterers may teach in order to corrupt their minds, cannot alter the moral any more than they can alter the physical essence of things. The people are not to be taught to think lightly of their engagements to their governors; else they teach governors to think lightly of their engagements to them.'[1]

It will hardly be denied that there is something in this language very alien to the tone of thought now prevailing in England, and especially in the English Liberal party. Their sentiment is probably expressed with much greater fidelity by Paine. 'What is government,' he asked, 'more than the management of the affairs of a nation? It is not, and from its nature cannot be, the property of any particular man or family, but of the whole community at whose expense it is supported; and though by force or contrivance it has been usurped into an inheritance, the usurpation cannot alter

[1] *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.*

the right of things. Sovereignty as a matter of right appertains to the nation only, and not to any individual, and a nation has at all times an inherent, indefeasible right to abolish any form of government it finds inconvenient, and establish such as accords with its interest, disposition, and happiness.'

The success of the 'Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs' was very great, but the leading Whigs kept a careful silence, and without disputing Burke's theory of the Constitution blamed the precipitance with which he had brought the question to an issue in Parliament. Lord Stormont had a long interview with him, in which he said that the breach in the party was solely due to the mutual imprudence of Fox and Burke. There was, he believed, no real material difference of principle between them, and on the subject of the confiscation of Church property they were completely at one. Fox was too sensible a man to wish for the destruction of the Constitution, and as for the rest of the party, he had not seen a single man who approved of the doctrines of Paine, or of anything like them, or who differed in any considerable degree from the principles of Burke. It was therefore in the highest degree imprudent to force these questions into discussion, and exceedingly unfavourable to the interests of the French aristocracy to represent a great English party as adverse to them, when in reality it was not.

Burke fully admitted that there was some force in these views. He did not himself believe that more than ten, or at most thirteen, members of the two Houses of Parliament really sympathised with the French, and he believed that 'inwardly even Fox did not differ from him materially, if at all,' but he answered that doctrines of the most dangerous character, and absolutely inconsistent with the British Constitution and with the original principles of the Whig party,

were now industriously circulated by societies and newspapers which purported to represent that party, and that all his endeavours to induce the Whig leaders to disclaim such doctors and doctrines had proved fruitless. On the contrary, Fox had repeatedly pronounced unqualified eulogies on the French Revolution, and in the very speech in which he had endeavoured to heal the quarrel, he had taken occasion to express his entire dissent from 'every doctrine' contained in the book in which Burke had most fully expressed his views on the British Constitution as well as on French affairs.[1] Stormont could only answer that Fox could not really have meant to condemn every part of Burke's book, and that the silence of the other Whig leaders was due to their fear of showing that there were divisions among them. Burke retorted that 'the sort of unanimity produced was a supposed common adherence to sentiments odious to the best of them.'[2]

He strenuously and fiercely maintained, in his private correspondence, that it was 'now absolutely necessary to separate those who cultivate a rational and sober liberty upon the plan of our existing Constitution, from those who think they have no liberty, if it does not comprehend a right in them of making to themselves new Constitutions at their pleasure.' The Whig party, he urged, as it had been originally formed and as he had always defended it, was as far as possible from a democratic party; and if it ever became a democratic party, it lost all right to the allegiance of those who joined it on its original principles. 'The party,' he wrote, 'with which I acted had by the malevolent and unthinking been reproached, and by the wise and good always esteemed and confided in as an aristocratic party.

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[1] See *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 389.
[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 224–226, 235, 236, 274.

Such I always understood it to be in the true sense of the word. I understood it to be a party in its composition and in its principles connected with the solid, permanent, long-possessed property of the country; a party which, by a temper derived from that species of property and affording a security to it, was attached to the ancient, tried usages of the kingdom; a party, therefore, essentially constructed upon a ground plot of stability and independence, . . . equally removed from servile Court compliances and from popular levity, presumption, and precipitation.' Its members were bound 'by the very constitution of the party . . . to support these aristocratic principles and the aristocratic interests connected with them as essential to the real benefit of the body of the people, to which all names of party, all ranks and orders in the State, and even Government itself ought to be entirely subordinate.' 'Against the existence of any such description of men as our party is in a great measure composed of, against the existence of any mode of government on such a basis, we have seen a serious and systematic attack attended with the most complete success, in another country, but in a country at our very door. . . . If I were to produce an example of something diametrically opposite to the composition, to the spirit, to the temper, to the character and to all the maxims of our old and unregenerated party, something fitted to illustrate it by the strongest opposition, I would produce what has been done in France. . . . They who cry up the French Revolution, cry down the party which you and I had so long the honour and satisfaction to belong to. . . . My party principles, as well as my general politics and my natural sentiments, must lead me to detest the French Revolution in the act, in the spirit, in the consequences, and most of all in the example.'

Among the many examples of apostasy from the

old Whig creed the most flagrant was furnished by the Prince of Wales. In the Regency debates no one had taken so prominent a part, no one had incurred so much odium on behalf of the claims of the Prince, as Burke, and he had argued against the Government measure on essentially the same principles as those on which he was arguing against the French Revolution. 'I endeavoured,' he wrote, 'to show that the hereditary succession could not be supported whilst a person who had the chief interest in it was, during a virtual interregnum, excluded from the Government; and that the direct tendency of the measure, as well as the grounds upon which it was argued, went to make the Crown itself elective, contrary (as I contended) to the fundamental settlement made after the Revolution.' The Prince 'is much more personally concerned in all questions of *succession* than the King, who is in possession;' yet 'he has been persuaded not only to look with all possible coldness on myself, but to lose no opportunity of publicly declaring his disapprobation of a book written to prove that the Crown to which (I hope) he is to succeed is not elective. For this I am in disgrace at Carlton House! . . . Those the most in his favour and confidence are avowed admirers of the French democracy. Even his Attorney and his Solicitor General[1] . . . are enthusiasts, public and declared for the French Revolution and its principles. . . . A Prince of Wales with democratic law servants, with democratic political friends, with democratic personal favourites! If this be not ominous to the Crown, I know not what is.'[2]

There had already, as we have seen, in the early years of the reign, been a marked divergence of tendency between the more aristocratic Whigs of the Rockingham section to which Burke belonged, and the

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[1] Erskine and Piggott. [2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 388–401.

more democratic Whigs who followed the standard of Chatham It is, however, a remarkable fact that Lord Camden, who had been the most trusted colleague of Chatham, and who more than any other man might be regarded as the exponent of his opinions, now wrote to Burke expressing his warm admiration of the 'Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs,' and his 'perfect concurrence in every part of the argument from the beginning to the end.' 'I have always,' he said, 'thought myself an old Whig and held the same principles with yourself; but I suppose none or very few of us ever thought upon the subject with so much correctness, and hardly any would be able to express their thoughts with such clearness, justness, and force of argument.'[1]

Burke was now living to a great degree among French gentlemen who had been driven into exile by the Revolution. The fearful sufferings that were inflicted in France during its first stage by the peasant war against the gentry, by the cessation of rents and feudal dues, by the violent expulsion of immense numbers from their homes, by the new oath which drove the clergy by thousands from their cures, and by the sudden suppression of the monasteries, is in general but little realised. These things have been thrown into the shade by the still darker and more dramatic atrocities of the Reign of Terror, and by the art of those French historians of the Revolution, who have laboured to persuade the world that the horrors which incontestably accompanied the movement they admire were mainly due to the emigration of the gentry and to the fear of invasion. This is a theory which will hardly survive among educated men its recent crushing exposure by Taine, and it was not likely to occur to those who came in contact with the innumerable

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii 228, 229.

fugitives who appeared in England within the first year of the Revolution. 'France,' said Fox in the debate on May 6, 'has established a complete, unequivocal toleration, and I heartily wish that a complete toleration was also established in England.' It is easy, replied Burke, to estimate the value of this toleration under which the whole French clergy have been deprived of their bread, unless they take an oath inconsistent with the teaching of their Church, while Sisters of Charity, engaged in tending the sick in the hospitals, have been dragged into the streets and scourged, for no other crime than that of receiving the Sacraments from a priest who had not submitted to the revolutionary test.[1]

The sufferings of the ruined gentry of France, with whom he was constantly associating, filled Burke with a compassion which at last blinded him to every other consideration, and excited his passions against their spoliators to the very verge of madness. In appeals for subscriptions to the English public he enumerated their wrongs with an admirable pathos,[2] and as early as November 1790 he described the Revolution with little exaggeration as 'the entire destruction (for it is no less) of all the gentlemen of a great country, the utter ruin of their property, and the servitude of their persons.' His indignation was all the greater because he knew as few Englishmen knew the many reforms which had been effected in France in the preceding decade; the readiness with which the King had surrendered his arbitrary power, and the privileged orders their most obnoxious privileges; the liberal spirit they displayed in the provincial assemblies, in the electoral assemblies, and at the opening of the States-General; and the perfect facility with which a sys-

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxix. 393, 397. Compare Taine, *Hist. de la Révolution*, i. 439-455.

[2] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 171-175.

tem of constitutional liberty could have been established with their concurrence. 'The French, he wrote, 'possessed a vast body of nobility and gentry, amongst the first in the world for splendour, and the very first for disinterested services to their country, in which I include the most disinterested and uncorrupt judicature (even by the confession of its enemies) that ever was. These they persecuted; they hunted them down like wild beasts; they expelled them from their families and their houses and dispersed them into every country in Europe, obliging them either to pine in fear and misery at home, or to escape into want and exile in foreign lands; nay, . . . they abrogated their very names and their titular descriptions as something horrible and offensive to the ears of mankind. The means by which all this was done leaves an example in Europe never to be effaced, and which no thinking man, I imagine, can present to his mind without consternation, that is, the bribing of an immense body of soldiers taken from the lowest of the people to a universal revolt against their officers, who were the whole body of the country gentlemen and the landed interest of the nation.' 'When I saw,' he continued, 'this mingled scene of crime, of vice, of disorder, of folly, and of madness, received by very many here not with the horror and disgust which it ought to have produced, but with rapture and exultation as some almost supernatural benefit showered down upon the race of mankind; and when I saw that arrangements were publicly made for communicating to these islands their full share of these blessings, I thought myself bound to stand out and by every means in my power to distinguish the ideas of a sober and virtuous liberty (such as I thought our party had ever cultivated) from that profligate, immoral, impious, and rebellious licence which, through the medium of every sort of disorder and calamity, conducts to some kind

or other of tyrannic domination.' 'The name of the Monarchy and of the hereditary Monarchy, too, they preserve in France . . . but against the nobility and gentry they have waged inexpiable war. There are at this day[1] no fewer than 10,000 heads of respectable families driven out of France. . . . What are we to think of a Constitution as a pattern from which the whole gentry of a country . . . fly as from a place of infection?'[2]

The extreme terror and hatred, however, with which Burke regarded the Revolution, sprang mainly from his deep conviction that its influence must be necessarily contagious, and probably cosmopolitan.

The English Revolution of 1688 had been a purely national event, turning mainly on the question whether James II. in dispensing with the penal statutes against Roman Catholics, and committing the other acts complained of in the Declaration of Rights, had exceeded the defined and legitimate powers of an English king. The American Revolution had turned mainly on the constitutional question whether the Imperial Parliament in imposing, for the defence of the Empire, direct taxation on the colonies, had transgressed its lawful province and invaded that of the local Legislatures. But the French Revolution, in the opinion of Burke, was of a wholly different kind. It belonged to the same category of events as the foundation of Mohammedanism and the Reformation of the sixteenth century. It was not a revolt against local or particular grievances, but the introduction into Europe of a new species of government resting on doctrines of the rights of man, which were equally applicable to all nations, and absolutely inconsistent with all ancient govern-

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[1] Jan. 31, 1792.
[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 392-394, 403, 404, 406.

ments. It was emphatically one of those revolutions of doctrine in which a spirit of proselytism forms an essential part, which must affect not only the external relations but also the internal constitutions of all surrounding countries, must introduce into them new interests, passions, and divisions, and must, like the religious movement of the sixteenth century, weaken and supersede the spirit of local patriotism, and combine in a single connection the inhabitants of many countries. 'In the modern world,' it is true, 'before this time there had been no instance of this spirit of general political faction, separated from religion, pervading several countries and forming a principle of union between the partisans in each,'[1] but it was quite in accordance with human nature that a political doctrine should act as widely and powerfully upon the passions and interests as a religious one. 'There is a wide difference between the multitude when they act against their Government from a sense of grievance, or from zeal for some opinions. When men are thoroughly possessed with that zeal, it is difficult to calculate its force. It is certain that its power is by no means in exact proportion to its reasonableness. It must always have been discoverable by persons of reflection, but it is now obvious to the world that a theory concerning government may become as much a cause of fanaticism as a dogma in religion.'[2]

The new political creed which it was attempted to establish in Europe was a perfectly definite one. It was 'that the majority, told by the head, of the taxable people in every country, is the perpetual, natural, unceasing, indefeasible sovereign; that this majority is perfectly master of the form as well as the administra-

[1] *Thoughts on French Affairs.*
[2] *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.*

tion of the State, and that the magistrates, under whatever names they are called, are only functionaries to obey the orders (general as laws or particular as decrees) which that majority can make; that this is the only natural government, and that all others are tyranny and usurpation.'[1] 'The principle of the French Revolution admits of no compromise, no temperament, no qualification. Like all metaphysical positions, if true at all, it must be true at all times, at all places, and under all circumstances; and it is a principle pointing necessarily to practice, inasmuch as it requires the perpetual exercise of the sovereignty by the existing majority, who cannot bind their good faith by any compact however solemn, for a year, a month, a week, or a single day.' 'All forms of government are but provisional till it shall please the Sovereign to change them, which he may do without any motive of moral or political necessity, without any consideration of expediency.' 'The tendency of such a creed is obvious. At a touch it crumbles the bond of every political society now in existence to a rope of sand. It is a sentence of deposition to all the kings of Europe, who claim to be sovereigns by the respective constitutions of their countries; it is an edict of proscription to all aristocratical bodies, which must be always dangerous to the necessary equality of this new system, and in mixed governments have a share in legislation directly incompatible with the right of a majority told by the head; and it is an absolute grant of every kingdom to the inferior orders, for they are and ever will be the many.'[2]

The existence in the centre of Europe of a powerful government resting on this creed was, in the eyes of Burke, the most tremendous fact in modern politics.

[1] *Thoughts on French Affairs.*

[2] *Annual Register*, 1791, pp. 211-215. There is, I think, very little doubt that this was written by Burke himself.

By the confiscation and division of great masses of property, by the annihilation of all old privileges and monopolies, by the destruction in a few months of all the institutions, corporations, traditional controls, usages and settled maxims of a great and venerable monarchy, the French politicians had appealed irresistibly to the most dangerous passions in societies—cupidity, envy, extravagant ambition, inordinate and intoxicating self-confidence. If a government founded on these principles, and appealing systematically to these passions, was firmly established in the country which, from its geographical position and from the character of its people, had at all times exercised the greatest influence over its neighbours, no government in Europe would be safe. French emissaries of sedition would multiply in every land. French examples and influence would be everywhere felt, stimulating into activity the most dangerous classes, shaking the whole settled order of Europe, holding out ideals of spoliation and anarchy which would make sober and regulated progress impossible. As Athens had once been at the head of a democratic, and Sparta of an aristocratic, faction in every Greek State, as the King of Sweden had once been at the head of a Protestant, and the King of Spain of a Catholic interest in many countries, so France would now become the head of a party of anarchy in every land. The new system, 'as it has first been realised dogmatically and practically in France, makes France the natural head of all factions formed on a similar principle, wherever they may prevail.' 'As long as it exists in France it will be the interest of the managers there, as it is the very essence of their plan, to disturb and distract all other governments, and their endless succession of restless politicians will continually stimulate them to new attempts.'[1]

[1] *Thoughts on French Affairs.* 'Wherever this principle prevails more or less, there is, and must be, a French faction proportion-

This was the estimate of the Revolution which now obtained a complete empire over the mind of Burke, and which inspired all he wrote. The activity of the correspondence between English democrats and French revolutionists; the multiplication of affiliated societies in the great English towns; the constant accounts of French political proselytism in the Netherlands, in Switzerland, and in some parts of Germany; and the avowed intention of the French, if a European war broke out, to make an encouragement of revolutionary passions in other countries their chief weapon in the conflict, corroborated and intensified his fears, and he was fully convinced of 'the utter impossibility of a counter revolution from any internal cause.' All the calculations and analogies drawn from the old settled governments of Europe seemed to him misleading when applied to this new and portentous phenomenon. 'The political and civil power in France,' he wrote, 'is now wholly separated from its property of every description, and neither the landed nor the moneyed interest possesses the smallest weight or consideration in the direction of any public concerns.' Reckless, unscrupulous, proselytising fanatics, commanding all the energies and ambitions unconnected with birth and property, were at the head of affairs; they had effectually bribed the richer peasantry by the confiscation of Church property and of feudal dues; they had constructed in

ately strong; and it will be much more closely united in politics to the great head at Paris, than even were the religious factions which so long distracted Europe, and have been so recently laid at rest. For the latter became political, not primarily and necessarily, but secondarily and incidentally. Here the very ground of distinction is the first and most important question of politics. That spirit of ambition which was formerly dreaded in the French Monarchy, has actuated the French Republic from its birth, and with such a powerful lever planted under the foundations of every Government in Europe, she threatens sooner or later to shake them all to pieces.' *Annual Register*, 1791, p. 215.

the municipalities the most tremendous engine of government and terrorism; they had infused into politics all the fanaticism and distempered energy of a new religion, and they taught a system of doctrine which was certain to spread if it was recommended for but a short time by the authority of example and of success. It had already 'very many partisans in every country in Europe, but particularly in England.' 'It is gaining ground in every country. Being founded on principles most delusive indeed, but the most flattering to the natural propensities of the unthinking multitude, and to the speculations of all those who think without thinking very profoundly, it must daily extend its influence.'[1]

Such were the opinions and such the feelings that animated Burke in preaching with the passion of another Peter the Hermit a crusade against the French Revolution. He had from the beginning watched with sympathy the great combination of the continental Powers that was forming against it, and at the request of Calonne, who acted as minister for the emigrant princes, Burke's son paid them a visit in the summer of 1791 as the representative of his father.[2]

Of the legitimacy of the intended war Burke had no doubt. It was to be undertaken for the relief of the oppressed King, Church, and landed gentry of France. All treaties with France had been made with the monarch, and supposed a monarchy to be the legal government of the country, and they were all, therefore, in his opinion, annulled when the monarchy was virtually destroyed. He quoted the opinion of Vattel, that when any country is divided the other Powers are free to take which side they please, and that when any country in the great federation of Europe has made itself a manifest

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[1] *Thoughts on French Affairs.*
[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 220, 221.

source of danger and disturbance to its neighbours, they have a right to interfere. He pointed to the recent suppression of popular movements in Holland, in the Austrian Netherlands, and in the bishopric of Liège, and he contended that such an invasion as he desired would be welcomed as a relief by all that was best in the French nation. Interference in a divided country 'must indeed always be a right whilst the privilege of doing good to others and of averting from them every sort of evil is a right. Circumstances may render this right a duty. It depends wholly on this, whether it be a *bonâ fide* charity to a party, and a prudent precaution with regard to yourself, or whether under the pretence of aiding one of the parties in a nation, you act in such a manner as to aggravate its calamities and accomplish its final destruction.'[1]

Of the magnitude and imminence of the danger to all nations, but especially to England, he had no doubt, and although he did not at first urge that she should take an active part, he claimed for the allies her moral support, and he predicted that she would be inevitably drawn into the conflict. Never before in the long history of the antagonism of the two nations had France, in his opinion, been so much a danger to England, and none of the many struggles to maintain the balance of power in Europe had involved more vital issues. 'This league is for the preservation of that state of things in Europe, to which we owe all that we are, and which furnished just grounds of expectation for further and safe improvement. Its foundation is just and honest.'[2] 'This evil in the heart of Europe must be extirpated from that centre, or no part of the circumference can be free from the mischief which radiates from it, and which will spread

[1] *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies.*
[2] *Correspondence*, iii. 271.

circle beyond circle, in spite of all the little defensive precautions which can be employed against it.'[1]

The French policy of Burke will now find few defenders, and the present writer is certainly not among the number. It is incontestable, indeed, that Burke realised the true character and the wide influence of the French Revolution much earlier and more clearly than his contemporaries; that he foresaw in the palmy days of 1790 the deepening horrors that ensued, and that he alone truly estimated the tremendous force both for aggression and defence which the revolutionary movement was about to generate. He was right in predicting that England would be dragged into the war, and whether he was right or wrong in urging the necessity to the peace of Europe of a Bourbon restoration, it is at least certain that long after he was in his grave the great Powers of Europe adopted and acted on his opinion. It is impossible to say with confidence whether he exaggerated the evils that would have ensued if a revolutionary government, such as Robespierre conceived, had been permanently established in France. The experiment was not tried, and after a brief period which forms one of the most hideous pages in the history of humanity, a great military despotism arose, which terminated the anarchical phase of the Revolution, at the cost of appalling calamities to the world. To a discriminating reader even the most violent writings of Burke on the French Revolution are full of interest and instruction, but it is impossible to deny that they are steeped in passion and exaggeration. Mirabeau and Lafayette were scarcely less abhorrent to him than Clootz and Robespierre; the sale of Church property under manifest and pressing necessity, and with a provision for paying salaries to the life tenants, seemed to him not less outrageous than the

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[1] *Considerations on the present State of Affairs*

wholesale confiscations of the revolutionary tribunals; and the Constituent Assembly, with its manifest good intentions, and its many great and lasting reforms, was denounced in language scarcely less vehement than that which was justly applied to the Convention.

It showed a strange flaw in his judgment that he should have ever imagined that the great Powers of Europe would combine in a disinterested crusade for the restoration of the old order in France, or that a foreign invasion could fail to aggravate the evil it was intended to cure. For the reasons already stated, Burke appears to me to have enormously exaggerated the dangers to England from French example. A policy of strict non-interference was probably that which would have given France the best chance of speedily throwing off the fever under which she was suffering, and if such a policy was not pursued by the other Powers it was at least in the highest degree for the advantage of England to remain as long as possible neutral in the conflict, while preparing herself for any eventuality. Whether, however, Burke had any real influence in plunging England into the war with France is extremely doubtful. He taught the nation to look with horror on the Revolution, and to wage the war against it with energy and unanimity, but it is not probable that any policy could have avoided it.

It must be remembered, too, that he strenuously insisted on three conditions as essential to the justification of an armed interference. The first was that the war should not be undertaken for any territorial aggrandisement, but for the sole purpose of restoring a settled order of government to a leading nation in Europe, and suppressing a system of rebellion, and contagious and proselytising anarchy, which was a manifest source of danger and disturbance to surrounding nations. The second was that in this war the part of the foreigner should not be that of a principal but of an ally. 'If I

could command the whole military arm of Europe,' he wrote, 'I am sure that a bribe of the best province in that kingdom would not tempt me to intermeddle in their affairs, except in perfect concurrence and concert with the natural legal interests of the country, composed of the ecclesiastical, the military, the several corporate bodies of justice and of burghership, making under a monarch (I repeat it again and again) the French nation according to its fundamental constitution. No considerate statesman would undertake to meddle with it upon any other condition.'[1]

The third condition was that the war should not be one for the restoration of despotism. On this subject he wrote most earnestly to his son, who was advising the French princes. They ought, he said, to promise distinctly and without ambiguity the restoration with the monarchy of a free constitution; the meeting of the States freely chosen, and voting by order, according to the ancient legal form; the abolition of letters of 'cachet' and all other arbitrary imprisonment. All taxes should be voted by the States; the Ministry should be made responsible; the revenue should be put out of the reach of malversation, and a synod of the Gallican Church should be summoned to reform its abuses. 'Without such a declaration,' he continued, 'or to that effect, they can hope no converts. For my part for one, though I make no doubt of preferring the ancient course, or almost any other, to this vile chimera and sick man's dream of government, yet I could not actively, or with a good heart and clear conscience, go to the re-establishment of a monarchical despotism in the place of this system of anarchy.'[2]

If these three conditions were observed, Burke be-

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[1] *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies.*
[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 349.

lieved that all the more respectable classes in France would welcome an invasion which freed them from intolerable terrorism, but he soon saw that his views were little likely to be adopted. 'I fear,' he once said, that I am the only person in France or England who is aware of the extent of the danger with which we are threatened.' 'In the whole hemisphere of politics I can scarcely see a ministerial head which rises to the level of the circumstances.'[1]

His letters are full of complaints of the supineness of the French King and nobles; of the inveterate intrigues of the French Queen; of the selfishness of the continental Sovereigns, who thought only either of their own order or of territorial aggrandisement; of the blindness and the levity of English politicians. While Fox—though with growing misgiving—looked upon the Revolution as a millennial dawn, while Pitt considered it as little more than a passing cloud, Burke saw plainly that it was a great crisis in human affairs, portending terrible and as yet unknown calamities to mankind. To many he seemed a mere dreamer of dreams, but the event soon justified his forecast. The tyranny of the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety which was fast approaching, was on the whole the most sanguinary and odious in modern history, and the career of Napoleon, which was a direct consequence of the subversion of the old order of French government, sacrificed about two millions of human lives, and all but ended in a total eclipse of the liberties of Europe.

For some time, as we have already seen, Burke had been painfully conscious that he was unfit to bear the strain of political excitement. He could not cast it off; it haunted him like a nightmare, and threw his nerves

[1] Butler's *Reminiscences*, i. 171.

into a morbid irritation. He complained that he was not well, and that he scarcely slept.[1] He had ardently wished to leave Parliament, and only shrank from doing so on account of the Indian business which he had undertaken, and which had more and more assumed in his mind the character of a solemn religious duty.[2] In private life Miss Burney noticed that while no one on other subjects could be more attractive, politics had to be carefully avoided. 'His irritability is so terrible on that theme, that it gives immediately to his face the expression of a man who is going to defend himself from murderers.'[3] Age was beginning to press visibly upon him, and although it had taken nothing from the power of his intellect, although it seemed to have even imparted a richer and more gorgeous splendour to his eloquence, it had robbed him of all elasticity of spirits. He felt himself, and his friends clearly saw, that he needed absolute repose, but French affairs plunged him into a condition of the most violent and painful excitement, and the correspondence which poured in upon him from all Europe, and his constant intercourse with men who had lost everything by the calamities in France, never suffered it to flag.

No one saw so deeply or so accurately into the

[1] Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 85.

[2] See the singularly solemn, touching, and characteristic letter which he wrote, when he knew himself to be dying (July 1796), to Dr. Laurence, who had been one of the counsel of the managers for the impeachment of Hastings. *Correspondence of Burke and Dr. Laurence*, pp. 53–56. Compare, too, in the same work the Introduction, pp. 22, 23. There may be much controversy about the merits of the case against Hastings, but no one who reads Burke's later letters and speeches can have any doubt about the spirit in which Burke undertook it.

[3] Diary of Madame d'Arblay, 1792. Francis, comparing Fox and Burke, says Fox 'seldom spoke very harshly of any individual. In this respect he was the reverse of Burke, with whom all mankind, as far as party and politics went, were God or devil.' Parkes and Merivale's *Life of Francis*, ii. 45.

future, but no one was at the same time more constantly haunted by the sense of the extreme uncertainty of all political predictions.[1] In his 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies,' which was published in 1793, there is a most impressive and powerful passage on the little weight that can on these matters be attached even to the most careful inferences drawn from history and speculation. 'There are some fundamental points in which nature never changes, but they are few and obvious, and belong rather to morals than to politics. But so far as regards political matters the human mind and human affairs are susceptible to infinite modifications, and of combinations wholly new and unlooked for. Very few, for instance, could have imagined that property, which has been taken for natural dominion, should through the whole of a vast kingdom lose all its importance and even its influence. How many could have thought that the most complete and formidable revolution in a great empire should be made by men of letters? that atheism could produce one of the most violently operative principles of fanaticism? that in a Commonwealth, in a manner cradled in war, and in an extensive and dreadful war, military commanders should be of little or no account? that the Convention should not contain one military man of name? that administrative bodies in a state of the utmost confusion and of but a momentary duration, and composed of men with

[1] The same conviction was constantly expressed by Frederick the Great, the keenest practical observer of his time. Thus in one of his letters he writes: 'Il y a une sorte de fatalité, ou à défaut de fatalité des causes secondes tout aussi inconnues, qui tournent souvent les événements d'une manière que l'on ne peut ni concevoir ni prévoir. Nous sommes des aveugles qui s'avancent en tâtonnant dans l'obscurité. Lorsqu'il se présente des circonstances favorables, il se fait une sorte d'éclaircie subite dont profitent les habiles. Tout le reste est le jouet de l'incertitude.' See Sorel, *Question d'Orient au XVIII^me Siècle*, pp. 81, 82, 108.

not one imposing part of character, should be able to govern the country and its armies with an authority which the most settled senates and the most respected monarchs scarcely ever had in the same degree?' The possibility that the French Revolution was the beginning of a new political state which would gradually unfold itself, and in which the old maxims and principles on which the ancient freedom of England mainly rested, might become inapplicable, was not altogether absent from his mind. 'If a great change is to be made in human affairs,' he wrote in 1791, 'the minds of men will be fitted to it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope, will forward it; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.'[1]

It was soon evident that the opinions of men in England were rapidly veering round to Burke, and testimonies of adhesion came from many sides. His old friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, who had always been a steady Whig, took occasion shortly after the breach to express his feelings, by appending to an engraving of one of his pictures of Burke the famous lines in 'Paradise Lost,' describing the solitary fidelity of Abdiel. A considerable number of impressions had been worked off before Burke learnt the compliment, and with characteristic modesty he at once hastened to Reynolds, and insisted that the lines should be obliterated on the plate, and that all impressions from it which had not been distributed should be destroyed.[2] Some of his warmest personal as well as political friends, however,

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[1] *Thoughts on French Affairs.*
[2] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 163, 164.

for a time stood aloof in manifest and painful perplexity. Such was Lord Fitzwilliam, who in private avowed his full agreement with Burke's estimate of the Revolution, and who retained all his affection for him, but who accused him of disloyalty to his party, and refused on this ground to give a seat in Parliament to his son.[1] Such was Sir Gilbert Elliot, who shrank from seeing him, fearing, as he frankly said, the influence which Burke seldom failed to obtain over his judgment.[2] Such was Windham, who had long looked on Burke as the wisest and best of living men, and had welcomed with enthusiasm his 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' but who now refused to meet him at a dinner party.[3] Yet all these were soon reunited to him, not only in personal friendship and affection, but also in political agreement. Miss Burney relates a characteristic conversation she had, at a somewhat earlier period, with Windham. She had spoken of Burke's wonderful abilities, but had kept a significant silence about his judgment. 'Suddenly,' she says, 'and with a look of extreme keenness, Mr. Windham turned his eyes upon me, and exclaimed, "Yes, and he has very highly also the faculty of being right . . . not the world alone, even his friends are apt to misjudge him. What he enters upon, however, with earnestness, you will commonly find, turns out as he represents it."'[4]

It was noticed as a sign of the direction of opinion, that Burke now seldom appeared in the popular caricatures as the 'Jesuit of St. Omer,' while he was constantly represented as a patriot denouncing the Revolution and its apologists.[5] The cry 'Church in danger' was fast rising as it had not done since the days of

[1] Lady Minto's *Life of Sir G. Elliot*, ii. 8.

[2] Ibid. p. 9.

[3] Windham's *Diary*, p. 226.

[4] Madame d'Arblay's *Diary*, 1790.

[5] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 164.

Sacheverell. In spite of the languor of the English Church during the eighteenth century, and the powerful anti-ecclesiastical influences that were abroad, Burke had probably not exaggerated when he described the English attachment to a religious national establishment as 'above all other things, and beyond all other nations,'[1] and although the destruction of a popish establishment in a foreign land might seem a matter of little consequence to Englishmen, it was too industriously held up as an example to be regarded with indifference. The clergy were soon thoroughly alarmed, and the pulpits began to ring with denunciations of the Revolution. More than one sermon against it was delivered in the presence of Burke; but though they echoed his views, he heard them with undisguised impatience. 'Surely,' he said, 'the Church is a place where one day's truce may be allowed to the dissensions and animosities of mankind.'[2]

The destruction of the privileges of the French aristocracy, and especially the exciting and dramatic episode of the flight to Varennes and the recapture of the King, greatly strengthened the popular interest in French affairs. In London there was no mistaking the delight at the news of the King's escape, and the dejection at his recapture, and if the flight had succeeded, there would probably have been a general illumination.[3] When the King escaped from Paris, the Jacobins in that city at once addressed a circular letter to all the societies affiliated with them, and a copy of this letter was sent to the Revolution Society in London, which published it in the English newspapers.[4] At the end of June 1791, Priestley wrote from Birmingham to

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[1] *Reflections on the French Revolution.*

[2] Prior's *Life of Burke*, ii. 162.

[3] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 225.

[4] Tomline's *Life of Pitt*, iii. 273.

Lindsey, 'Our anxiety during the King of France's escape, and our joy on his capture, cannot be described. . . . The High Church party are mortified in the extreme. . . . A majority, I fear, of Englishmen are in their sentiments, so that we are far indeed behind the French. In spite of all we can write or do, an attachment to high maxims of Government gains ground here, and the love of liberty is on the decline.'[1]

The Society at Birmingham, of which Priestley was the most prominent member, advertised their intention of meeting at an hotel on Thursday, July 14, to commemorate the taking of the Bastille; and a few days before the meeting, an exceedingly seditious and inflammatory handbill, which was afterwards disclaimed by the Society, had been circulated. The result was a popular rising, which on a smaller scale reproduced nearly all the features of the Gordon riots in London. It began with an attack on the hotel where the members of the Society were assembled, but before the day had closed, the mob had totally destroyed two of the principal meeting houses in Birmingham, as well as the house of Priestley, his library, his manuscripts, and his philosophical apparatus. On Friday the magistrates enrolled a large body of special constables, but they proved too weak to restrain the mob. For three days the houses of prominent Dissenters or democrats in Birmingham and its immediate neighbourhood were wrecked or burned. Many lives were lost, and as in London, the rioters were often too intoxicated to escape from the flames they had kindled. Churchmen and Methodists were in general unmolested, but there were bands of men levying indiscriminately contributions of drink and money. It was not till Monday morning

[1] Rutt's *Life of Priestley*, ii. 114.

that the arrival of a troop of cavalry from Nottingham restored order.[1]

The tide ran so high that Priestley found it necessary to leave Birmingham, and after a short residence in London he took refuge in America. His pecuniary losses were compensated by private contributions and by a rate levied on the district where they had occurred,[2] but the loss of his manuscripts could not be replaced, and he could not console himself by any belief in his popularity. 'The same bad spirit,' he wrote, 'pervaded the whole kingdom,' and at Hackney, Manchester, and all over the West of England he believed it to be nearly as powerful as at Birmingham.[3] Burke looking at the situation from another point of view corroborates this opinion. He noticed that at this time in all parts of England the Government had difficulty in protecting the affiliated democratic societies from the attacks of the mob.[4]

While these things were happening, the Constituent Assembly, which fills the first act of the great drama of the French Revolution, was drawing rapidly to its close. The reorganisation of France which has been described had been mainly accomplished by April 1791, but on the second of the preceding month France had experienced a fatal loss in the death of Mirabeau, the only really great leader, before Napoleon, produced by the Revolution, the only man whose prescient and dazzling intellect, and whose indomitable will, might have at once guided and moderated its course. If his moral character had been in any degree on a level with his abilities, and if a few more years had been granted him,

[1] See a full account of the riots, *Annual Register*, 1791, pp. 29–32. Rutt's *Life of Priestley*, ii. 116, 117.

[2] Ibid. ii. 121.

[3] Ibid. ii. 125.

[4] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 225.

he might have taken a foremost place among the rulers of men. He died predicting great calamities to his country. 'Pigmies,' he once said, 'can destroy, but it needs a great man to build,' and he fully saw that, in spite of all that had been done, no lasting edifice had as yet been constructed.

To the Court with which he had of late been negotiating, his loss was irreparable. Ever since October 5 and 6, 1789, the position of Lewis XVI. had been an intolerable one. Denuded one by one of his royal prerogatives, wounded deeply in his religious feelings by the civil constitution of the clergy, which had now been formally condemned by the Pope, deprived of his body-guard, restricted in his movements, and repeatedly menaced and insulted, he was a virtual prisoner, while the princes of his family were in Germany endeavouring to form a league for his deliverance. At last, after long and painful hesitation, he resolved to make an effort to recover his freedom by flying to the frontier town of Montmédy, where the Marquis de Bouillé, at the head of a body of troops who had not yet swerved from their allegiance, was ready to receive him. If these were not sufficient, the Emperor Leopold promised an Austrian force. On the night of June 20, the royal fugitives left the Tuileries on their ill-fated enterprise. The next day they were arrested at Varennes, and brought back prisoners to Paris.

The danger of the situation was much aggravated by the memorial which the King had left behind him, protesting against and invalidating all that had been done during his captivity. He enumerated in this remarkable document the long series of concessions which he had made. He had of his own free will summoned the States-General, doubled the number of the deputies of the third estate, invested the States-General in the session of June 23 with the essential powers of a free

Parliament, put an end to the long conflict of orders by himself directing their union, introduced large and searching economies into his Court. But all his acts, he complained, had been misconstrued and perverted. The States-General, usurping the character of a Constituent Assembly, had undertaken to remodel the whole Constitution of France. It denied the King the right of withholding his assent from articles which were constitutional; it assumed to itself the sole right of deciding what articles belonged to this class, and it had reduced his authority to a mere phantom. His right of dissolving the Assembly, and his right of pardon, had been annulled. His veto on legislation was so limited as to be purely illusory.' Almost all his power, almost all his patronage in the law courts, in the army, in the interior administration of the country, in the department of finances, in the management of foreign affairs, had been taken away, and for nearly two years he had been a prisoner, exposed to gross indignities in his own capital. In the meantime the whole country had been thrown into unexampled confusion; 'all the powers of Government disowned; all property violated; personal safety everywhere endangered; crimes remaining unpunished; perfect anarchy triumphing over the laws;' a multitude of self-constituted clubs ruling France with a rod of iron. The decrees which he had signed, he had signed because he had no power to resist, and he had withdrawn for a time from his capital in order to appeal freely to his people. With their assistance he hoped to give France well-established liberty, resting on a Constitution freely accepted, consistent with the due respect for religion and property, and with the firm administration of the law.[1]

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[1] See for this document and the reply of the National Assembly, the *Annual Register*, 1791, pp. 217-238.

Fox afterwards said to Madame de Staël that the French ought at this time to have suffered the King to escape, and to have established a Republic in his absence. It seemed, indeed, as if the restoration of the monarchy under Lewis XVI. had become impossible, and if the National Assembly had been a body such as Burke described it, there was everything to be feared from its exasperation. But, in truth, the language of Burke as applied to the first Assembly of the Revolution, though in no degree stronger than that of Mounier and of Lally Tollendal, was both exaggerated and misleading. This Assembly had indeed done some things which were grossly tyrannical, and many things which were manifestly foolish. It had remained shamefully passive while its proceedings were systematically interrupted from the galleries, while its most respectable members were intimidated and insulted, while scenes of intolerable outrage and violence were multiplying throughout France. There had never, as Mounier truly said,[1] been an example in Europe 'of a country of equal size and population in which the means of maintaining order were so completely annihilated, and in which anarchy had been more general and more unbridled,' but the Assembly had as yet made no single effort to arrest the evil by armed repression, or even by serious protest. It had destroyed or paralysed all the institutions and organisations of France; it had usurped the whole legislative authority; it had made the Executive so feeble that anarchy was inevitable, and all real power was passing fatally and swiftly into the most dangerous hands.

All this may be truly said, but it is also true that this Assembly, though seriously weakened by the secession of many of its best members, still consisted for the most

[1] Mounier, *Recherches sur les Causes qui ont empêché les Français de devenir libres*, ii. 174.

part of men who, though they were theorists and enthusiasts, were not voluntary tyrants or voluntary anarchists, and were far from vicious or malevolent. It contained a very unusual amount of talent, and many men of high character and unobtrusive knowledge; but it was inexperienced and unguided, and divisions, jealousies, cowardice, contagious enthusiasm, and a servile devotion to general maxims and abstract principles played a great part in its proceedings. One of the most remarkable lessons which history teaches is, how difficult it is to infer from the acts of legislators their dispositions or even their intentions. It is quite possible for measures to be carried by a Government, a party, or a Parliament, which the majority of the members who compose that Government, party, or Parliament, heartily dislike. The resolution of a few extreme and united men, the admission in an apparently innocuous form of some principle which may be afterwards extended, the surprises and unexpected combinations and compromises of party tactics, the lassitude or cowardice or want of foresight of majorities, the piecemeal and unconnected manner in which great questions are debated, often give a turn to events wholly different from the genuine wishes of the actors. A numerous assembly, inexperienced, intoxicated with enthusiasms and wild political doctrines, and entirely uncontrolled by any leading statesman or well-established party organisations, was peculiarly liable to blind, sudden, inconsiderate and dangerous impulses.

But there is, I think, abundant evidence, both from the writings of its contemporaries and from its own proceedings, that the National Assembly was an essentially well-meaning body. Its most honourable repudiation of bankruptcy at a time when bankruptcy seemed most tempting, its refusal to protect itself by any press law from the most constant and virulent attacks, its refusal to abridge the liberty which it had proclaimed by any

permanent measure against emigration,[1] its disinterested though most foolish resolution that none of its members should during the next four years accept any office under the Crown, show clearly the better side of its character, and its proceedings after the capture of the King prove decisively that although it had completely sapped the monarchy it had no real wish to destroy it. A strong and genuine desire was shown to maintain Lewis XVI. on the throne, to abstain from any measure which might give occasion for a foreign invasion, and, above all, to terminate as quickly as possible the Revolution. The Republican party under Robespierre, which desired the deposition of the King, proved wholly insignificant in the Chamber,[2] and Barnave, who had once been in the extreme party of Revolution, threw all his eloquence into the cause of the King. Among the Paris clubs a more violent and formidable republican party appeared, but for the first and only time in its history the National Assembly nerved itself to maintain order by force. Martial law was proclaimed. The red flag was hung out from the Town Hall, and Lafayette, at the head of the National Guard, suppressed energetically and with some bloodshed a republican rising. It was determined that the Constitution should be revised, embodied in a single instrument, and formally adopted by the King, and that if he consented to swear to it, this should be deemed his reconciliation with the nation, and his captivity should cease. Till that time he was provisionally suspended.

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[1] Some temporary measures were taken after the flight to Varennes, but they were abolished on Sept. 14. See Laferrière, *Hist. des Principes de la Révolution*, pp. 248, 249.

[2] On the very small number of real Republicans in France in 1791, see Gentz, 'La Marche de l'Opinion publique en Europe relativement à la Révolution Française,' *Mercure Britannique*, iii. 209, 210. Brissot even declared (though no doubt with much exaggeration) that in the August of that year he knew but two Republicans, Pétion and Buzot, beside himself.

The King accepted these terms, and on September 14, 1791, he solemnly promised to observe the Constitution containing the many changes that have been already described. It is only here necessary to add that the future Legislatures were limited to periods of two years, which the King had no power to abridge by a dissolution; that they were to consist of 745 members, irrespective of those who might be afterwards granted to the colonies; and that they were to be chosen by a process of double election, primary Assemblies consisting of all 'active citizens,' who fulfilled the conditions that have been already named, electing electors who in their turn chose the deputies. On the motion of Robespierre all property qualification for the deputies was abolished, but it was still necessary for the electors in the primary Assemblies to pay a small direct tax equal to the value of three days' labour, and a substantial property qualification was exacted from the members of the electoral Assemblies. In towns of more than 6,000 souls, it consisted of a revenue equal to the value of 200 days' labour, drawn from property, or of the occupation of a house of the annual value of 500 days' labour. In the country and in the smaller towns the qualification was somewhat lower. One part of the Constitution is curious, because it shows that the National Assembly was not absolutely blind to the lesson which the experience of its own proceedings had abundantly supplied, of the facility with which a single Chamber can change all the institutions of a country, and of the extreme danger of such a facility of organic change. It was provided that no change could be made in the Constitution until three successive Legislatures had asked for it, and until it had been enacted by a fourth Legislature specially chosen and specially enlarged in numbers for this very purpose. It is a strange thing if an Assembly, which had shown itself so

contemptuous of all the limitations of its own authority, and which had so effectually destroyed every possible counterpoise to its power, should have imagined that it could in this way effectually bind its successors.

One other act of the first National Assembly must be mentioned, which, though carried with excellent intentions, was perhaps in its consequences the worst of all. It was the act of abnegation by which it decreed that none of its members should be eligible for the succeeding Legislature. In this way an Assembly, whose chief faults sprang from inexperience in the management of public affairs, and which had at last acquired some experience, condemned the country to fall again into the hands of men who had none, and the French people were forbidden to select as their representatives any of those eminent and respectable men to whom they had spontaneously turned at the time when the elections were really free, and before the tyranny of the clubs had begun. Hardly any other single step contributed so largely to prepare the way for the horrors that followed. France soon presented to the world the appalling spectacle of a great nation which was mainly governed by its criminal classes, and by fanatics who in wisdom and sobriety of judgment were hardly above the level of Bedlam.

At the time when the Constituent Assembly dissolved itself, the political horizon around France was rapidly darkening. During the latter half of 1789, during the whole of 1790, and during the first half of 1791 it appeared probable to the best observers that whatever effect the French Revolution might have upon the internal constitutions of the great kingdoms of Europe, it would not lead to any foreign war. It is true that some signs of a menacing description might be already detected. Several of the German princes had large possessions and feudal rights in Alsace which

had been acquired when that province was part of Germany, but which had been recognised when Alsace had become French, and had been formally confirmed and guaranteed by the Treaty of Westphalia; and the abolition of these, with all other feudal rights, in August 1789 produced angry protests from the German princes, and great indignation in the German Diet. There were also many disquieting symptoms of the close connection between French demagogues and the discontented elements in other nations. French influence was clearly traced in the troubles in the Austrian Netherlands, and in Liège. The so-called patriotic party in Holland began to revive. There were signs of the new spirit in Poland, in Saxony, in the ecclesiastical electorates of Germany, in Berne, and in Geneva. Refugees from the insurgent provinces of other Powers were received with ostentatious favour by French politicians, and letters of sympathy were read in the Jacobin Club of Paris from every capital in Europe. In June 1790 the Prussian Anacharsis Clootz, accompanied by a number of adventurers in foreign dresses, appeared in the National Assembly as 'the ambassador of the human race,' claiming in the name of the enslaved nations of Europe the sympathy of emancipated France, and the Assembly treated this grotesque masquerade with perfect seriousness, and welcomed the 'ambassador' to the sitting. On the other hand, it was well known that streams of emigrants were passing from France, and imploring succour in the chief Courts of the Continent. Rumours of coming invasion were frequently circulated and readily believed, and Lameth declared that the approaching war would be a war of all the kings against all the nations.[1]

At the same time nothing can be more certain than

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[1] See *Annual Register*, 1791, pp. 213, 214. Sybel, *Hist. de la Révolution*, i. 197, 198, 201.

that the bulk of the first National Assembly was as far as possible from desiring any foreign conquest. The whole enthusiasm, the whole ambition of the rising party was directed to realising in France a Government in accordance with the theories of Rousseau. The one serious danger of war was that which arose in the autumn of 1790, in the quarrel between England and Spain on the question of Nootka Sound, when Spain, in accordance with the terms of the still subsisting alliance, claimed the assistance of France, and when the King's Ministers showed some inclination to accede to the demand. The Assembly, as we have seen, acting in this case at the instigation of the most revolutionary party, entirely refused its assent. It marked its emphatically peaceful policy, by enacting that the King could never proclaim war except after its decree. It voted a solemn declaration that it disclaimed in the name of the French nation every desire for conquest or aggression. It ordered the chained figures representing conquered nations that surrounded the statue of Lewis XIV. to be taken away, as they were an insult to other countries inconsistent with the spirit of the new Government, and, what was more important, it voted after some months' delay an indemnity to the German princes in compensation for their feudal rights.

These things, but especially the extreme intensity with which the national mind was concentrated on internal and organic changes, seemed to foreshadow a long period of peace, and the impression was strengthened by the utter confusion of French finances, and the complete disorganisation of the French army. All discipline and subordination seemed to have disappeared from the ranks, and when directions were given to arm the fleet at Brest, in consequence of the English preparations for war with Spain, the alarming fact was disclosed that the same spirit of mutiny was equally preva-

lent among the sailors, and that the French fleet was entirely unfit for a serious war.

The question of peace or war seemed, therefore, to depend on the attitude of the other continental Powers. Their combinations, alliances, and antagonisms had during the last few years been continually changing like the patterns in a kaleidoscope, and a preceding chapter[1] will, I hope, have given a sufficiently clear idea of the objects at which they were aiming.

The policy of Russia was simple and perfectly consistent. She desired to appropriate as much as she could of the territory of Turkey, and what remained of the territory of Poland, and as a means to the latter end, to maintain in that unfortunate country a general anarchy and a strong Russian interest. Age had in no degree diminished the energy and ambition of Catherine, and a long career of success had given her a boundless self-confidence. No sovereign in Europe was employed in enterprises of aggrandisement so incessantly or so skilfully, with a more complete disregard for all moral scruple, with a more absolute and cynical indifference to the sacrifice of hecatombs of human lives. When, however, the French Revolution broke out, she was still occupied with her Turkish war.

The objects of the Emperor were less constant and more various. The close and unnatural connection which had subsisted between the Courts of Vienna and St. Petersburg during the reign of Joseph II. was diminished—it was at first thought destroyed—by the death of that sovereign in February 1790, and the Convention of Reichenbach, which was completed in the following summer, withdrew Austria from the Turkish war. The unexpected protraction, however, through more than a year, of the negotiation for the definite peace, soon

[1] Ch. xvii.

showed that the connection between Austria and Russia was not at an end, and that by supporting Russian policy, the Emperor still hoped to gain some Turkish territory on the side of Orsova. He was also desirous of minimising as much as possible the popular privileges he was obliged to concede or recognise in Flanders, and perhaps of reverting, if an occasion offered, to the idea of Joseph of exchanging Austrian Flanders for Bavaria. As the brother of the French Queen he was more interested than other sovereigns in French affairs, and the peculiar dignity of his position as the head of the Empire made him the natural champion of monarchy, and of the interests of the minor German princes who were aggrieved by the abolition of feudal rights in Alsace. Leopold had come to the throne with the reputation of an eminently far-seeing, cautious, and sagacious man, and his phlegmatic and procrastinating disposition was curiously unlike the restless and impulsive nature of his brother; but, like most men of his temperament, he was hesitating and irresolute, and these faults are more dangerous in foreign than in domestic policy. The bad condition of Austrian finances greatly strengthened his pacific tendencies. Since 1756 Austria had been in close alliance with France, and Kaunitz, who was the chief author of that alliance, though in extreme old age, had still a great influence on Austrian affairs. With Russia the Emperor was on terms of alliance. With Poland he was on friendly terms, but his relations with Holland were still troubled, and the difficulties which had arisen about the negotiations at Sistova made it for some months very probable that the Eastern war might again extend its area, and that Russia and the Emperor might be found in armed opposition to Prussia, England, and Turkey. Among English politicians the Emperor was at this time regarded with extreme distrust.

Prussia, as we have seen, was still in close alliance

with England and Holland, but her national policy was steadily directed to two objects. The first was, to oppose and weaken in every field the Austrian power, which overshadowed her in Germany. The second was, to increase her Polish possessions by the annexation of Dantzig and Thorn. She was much disappointed at the failure of the ingenious combinations by which she had sought to obtain this end, and the Triple Alliance had been more than once severely strained. England and Holland were great colonial Powers, but in Europe their supreme interest was the maintenance of a permanent and secure peace. Prussia, on the other hand, was a rising Power eagerly bent on territorial aggrandisement. Unlike the other continental Powers, she possessed a regular treasure accumulated with a view to war, and it was the firm conviction of her King that his army was the best in Europe. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the difficulty of maintaining a united policy between England, Holland, and Prussia, should have been extremely great; but Pitt attached the utmost value to the Prussian alliance, and hoped, by gradually drawing the Emperor into it, to establish a connection which would secure to Europe that long period of peace which he most ardently desired.

It was on the action of these three Powers that the question of peace or war with France mainly depended. The Kings of Spain and Naples, indeed, and the Duke of Savoy were ready to give the French emigrants some hopes and even some money, and Gustavus III. of Sweden was not only ready but eager to draw the sword on their behalf. Perfectly incapable either of lasting attachment or resentment, and caring for little but the excitement of adventure, this strange sovereign was now in close alliance with his old enemy Russia, and was burning to distinguish himself in new fields. But his exchequer, as usual, was empty, and he

could do nothing without the subventions of his neighbours.

The real interest and attention of the three great continental Powers, however, were now directed much less to France and its Revolution than to another revolution which appeared to them much more closely connected with their interests, and which it will now be necessary very briefly to describe.

Ever since the death of Sobieski in 1696, the condition of Poland had been one of deplorable and increasing anarchy. In an open country surrounded by ambitious and intriguing neighbours, a strong internal organisation and a powerful and well-disciplined army were absolutely essential; but Poland was cursed with the most miserable Constitution that ever enfeebled and demoralised a nation. Her elective monarchy continually exposed her to civil war, to foreign interference, to sovereigns who were foreign nominees; while the fear lest the reigning sovereign should found a dynasty led the Diet to reduce the army much below the limits which were essential to the safety of the country. Political power was almost wholly in the hands of a numerous and poor nobility, while the absurd institution of the Liberum Veto enabled a single dissenter to invalidate the proceedings of a whole Diet.[1] Never was there a Constitution more manifestly framed to paralyse national prosperity, and to invite and facilitate foreign intrigue. Russia carefully and with great expenditure maintained her party in the country, and Sweden,

[1] In cases of extreme necessity, it was possible to 'confederate' the Diet, in which case the Liberum Veto was for a short time suspended, and questions were carried by plurality of votes. See Count von Moltke's *Poland* (English trans.), pp. 14, 15. Rousseau, *Gouv. de Pologne*, ch. ix. La Croix, *Constitutions of Europe*, i. 312–315.

Prussia, Austria, and France, had all at different times pursued the same policy. Augustus II., who succeeded Sobieski, drew Poland into close alliance with Russia in her long conflict with Charles XII. of Sweden, and the Polish crown became one of the great objects of the war. Twice Augustus was dethroned. Twice he regained his crown, and when he died in 1733 he left his country almost ruined by war, and incurably divided into hostile factions. Stanislaus, who was then elected, was dethroned by a Russian army, and Russian power placed both Augustus III. of Saxony and his successor, Stanislaus Poniatowski, on the Polish throne.

Already, and indeed for many years, there had been frequent plans and predictions of a partition of Poland.[1] Corruption and anarchy had greatly weakened the national character, but Poland contained many true patriots, and they saw clearly that a reform of the Constitution was indispensable to the security of their country. If the nation had been left free to work out its own destinies such a reform would probably have been effected, but it was the deliberate and systematic policy of Russia and Prussia to maintain anarchy in Poland in order that it might never rise to prosperity or power or independence. With this object they agreed at the beginning of the reign of Stanislaus Poniatowski, that they would maintain by force the existing Constitution and oppose any attempt to abolish the Liberum Veto or to make the monarchy hereditary. A strong and earnest effort was, notwithstanding, made to effect the former object, and the reform was so powerfully supported that it would have undoubtedly succeeded had not Russia again interfered, and re-established, with the concurrence of Prussia, the Liberum

[1] For an interesting collection of predictions and schemes of partition, see Sorel, *Question d'Orient au XVIII^me Siècle*, pp. 19–21, 37. Fletcher's *History of Poland*, pp. 86–88.

Veto in its full stringency.[1] Religious dissensions which now broke out gave new pretexts for Russian interference. Russian armies menaced, invaded, ravaged, and occupied the country, and Polish patriots were sent by Russian authority to Siberia. The jealousy of the three great Powers alone for a time saved Poland. At last they agreed upon their share of the spoil. In 1772 they signed 'in the name of the Holy Trinity' treaties for the plunder of Poland, and in a few months the first partition was easily effected. It was justified at the time, and has been defended by some later historians on the ground of that very anarchy, which it had been for many years a main object of two of the plundering Powers to foment and to perpetuate.

Poland emerged from the ordeal weakened, mutilated, and humiliated, but still a not inconsiderable Power, and for a time there seemed some hope that the greed of her neighbours was sated, and that she would be allowed to attain some measure of prosperity. A strong national spirit was aroused by disaster, and great efforts were made to improve the army, to disseminate education, and to raise up a party favourable to administrative reform.[2] The three Powers at the time of the partition formally guaranteed the integrity of the portion of Poland which remained, but Kaunitz and Frederick the Great at this very time distinctly foresaw that when it became convenient another partition would follow.[3] For the present, however, the language of the three Powers was very conciliatory, and as the Turkish war was impending, all parties desired a Polish alliance. In 1776 the King himself urged upon the Diet the necessity of revising the Constitution.

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[1] Sorel, pp. 15, 24. Fletcher, pp. 206, 218, 219.

[2] See on these reforms, Oginski's *Mémoires sur la Pologne*, i. 23–26.

[3] Sorel, *Question d'Orient au XVIII[me] Siècle*, pp. 271, 272.

In 1780 the Chancellor Zamoiski proposed the abolition of the Liberum Veto and of the election of the Sovereign, but the propositions were rejected by the Diet. The serfs, however, on many large properties were emancipated, and there was a strong movement towards an union of classes. In 1787, when Catherine was making her triumphal journey through the Crimea and preparing another invasion of Turkey, Stanislaus obtained from her an assurance that Russia would not make a change in the Constitution of Poland a pretext for a new partition, and a similar assurance was obtained from Joseph of Austria.[1] Catherine had at this time great hopes of obtaining an alliance of the Poles against their old supporters the Turks, and such an alliance was formally tendered, but it was rejected by the Poles, who had suffered intolerable misery from the semi-barbarous hordes of Russia, while the Turks had observed all the terms of the Peace of Carlowitz with that scrupulous fidelity which so remarkably distinguished them from Christian Powers.

Another alliance, however, was speedily formed, which seemed to promise happier days for Poland. When the negotiation with Russia was pending, the Minister of the King of Prussia presented to the Polish Diet in the name of his Court a remarkable paper, solemnly protesting against the proposed alliance. It could add nothing, the Prussian Minister said, to the security of Poland, for both Russia and the Emperor had already guaranteed its integrity. Rumours, it is true, had been circulated, deeply derogatory to the honour of the King of Prussia, imputing to him designs inconsistent with the integrity of Poland. Against all such imputations the Prussian Minister solemnly protested, and in exchange for the Russian alliance he

[1] *Mémoires d'Oginski*, i. 28; Fletcher, p. 297.

offered Poland a close alliance with Prussia, with a renewed promise to defend her against every enemy.

This alliance was speedily accepted. Prussia solemnly guaranteed the integrity of Poland. She promised to assist her against all hostile attacks and all interference with her internal concerns. The King of Prussia not only fully recognised the right of the Polish people as an independent nation to revise their Constitution, but he also strongly urged them to do so.

It is probable that the hope of obtaining, by some amicable arrangement, Dantzig and Thorn was already in the minds of the Prussian statesmen, but this question was not as yet brought forward, and the immediate motives of their policy were of a different kind. It was at this time their main object to build up a system of alliances in opposition to Russia and the Emperor; and if, as appeared probable, the chief scene of the conflict was in Turkey, the assistance of Poland would be very valuable. The Prussian policy of detaching Poland from Russia was, however, perfectly successful, and relying on Prussian support the Polish Diet, which first met in September 1788 and which was confederated for the emergency, carried a series of reforms which totally changed the Constitution and condition of Poland. It was decreed that the army should be raised from 20,000 to 100,000 men. The system of taxation was thoroughly revised. A considerable representation was given to the trading towns. The excessive powers of the Dietines were abolished. The Liberum Veto was swept away, and finally, on May 3, 1791, a new Constitution was voted, in which, after the reigning King, the Crown was offered to the Elector of Saxony and to his heirs for ever.

It became evident at an early stage of these reforms how greatly the consideration of Poland in Europe had been raised. Sweden and Turkey now eagerly sought

her alliance, and the establishment of hereditary monarchy was believed throughout Europe to have laid the foundation of Polish stability. It was, however, clear to all close observers that Polish statesmen were playing a very dangerous game, and it is easy in the light of subsequent events to detect the grave mistakes of their policy. It was certain that Russia would resent bitterly what was done, and she early announced to the Diet that she would permit no change whatever in the Constitution of 1775. She was at present deeply involved in the Eastern question, but the Polish reforms were prolonged over so long a period that they had no time to consolidate themselves before Russia was again free. Everything too depended upon the fidelity of Prussia to her engagements, but the Poles had neglected one powerful means of attaching her. The King of Prussia had offered a commercial treaty in consideration of the cession of Dantzig and Thorn, and English mediation was urgently employed to support him. But the national feeling of Poland was so strongly opposed to the cession that the demand was refused.

It is not surprising that it should have been so. No country in which a strong national sentiment exists has ever voluntarily consented to cede a well-affected portion of its territory; but the impolicy of the refusal was not the less conspicuous. There was a perceptible shade of coldness introduced into the relations between the two countries, and it was deepened by a rumour which was spread in Poland that Prussia and Russia had been negotiating another partition, and by jealousy felt at Berlin at the somewhat more friendly relations of the Emperor to Poland. At the same time there was no breach or quarrel. The King of Prussia on perceiving the feeling of the Poles withdrew his demand. The treaty of alliance, the solemn guarantee of the integrity of Poland, the promise so recently and so

emphatically made that Prussia would defend Poland from any attempt to meddle with her internal affairs, still remained, but Polish statesmen ought to have learned from recent experience how little reliance is to be placed on national honour when it is dissevered from national interest. It was extremely probable that war might at this time speedily break out between Prussia and Russia, and it was therefore a pressing interest of the former Power to be on good terms with Poland. But when the dangers of a Turkish war had passed away, when the changing aspect of continental policy again drew Prussia into connection with Russia and Austria, was it certain that Prussia would not break her compact, betray the country which had trusted to her, and once more seek for her aggrandisement by fomenting and maintaining anarchy in Poland?[1]

To many the imputation would have seemed too gross to have been for a moment entertained, but there were some good judges to whom such possibilities seem to have already occurred. Hailes, who was at this time the English Minister at Warsaw, had formed a very unfavourable judgment both of the strength of Poland and of the character of her political classes, and his bias was evidently intensified by irritation at the failure of his attempts to negotiate a commercial treaty between Great Britain and Poland, and to induce the Poles to cede Dantzig and Thorn to Prussia. He wrote to his Government that he had strongly discouraged the design of the Polish statesmen to establish an hereditary monarchy. The Elector of Saxony, he predicted, would never accept the crown except with the assent of the three Powers and the unanimous wish of the nation, and these conditions could never be attained.

[1] See Sybel, *Hist. de l'Europe pendant la Révolution Française,* i. 285–297. The account of these transactions in Sybel is naturally written with a strong Prussian bias.

The enemies of order and the friends of Russia would be sure to intervene, and a civil war would probably break out. 'The nation itself has neither will nor opinion, and it may be easily led into any system which those who guide it think proper to adopt.'

His warnings were not attended to. It was answered, he said, that as long as the crown of Poland was elective there could be no stability, no security against a civil war at every vacancy; that the present moment, when the three Courts were occupied with more material concerns, was a good opportunity for settling the matter; that the condition of the country was humiliating and precarious; that all foreign ministers complained of the want of system and concert in the Government, and that it was time that the Polish nation should be freed from dishonourable subjection to foreign influence.[1] Hailes was obliged to admit that in some respects his predictions were signally falsified. The great constitutional change was carried through the Diet on a wave of enthusiasm, and was received with perfect acquiescence by the country. Not a drop of blood was shed. 'Everything,' wrote Hailes, two months later, 'is perfectly quiet at Warsaw and in the provinces, and there is no apparent opposition to the new establishment, and the Russian party, so violent a short time since, has totally disappeared.' All the Dietines ratified the new Constitution without difficulty. The oath of fidelity to it was readily taken. There was not the smallest attempt at insurrection, and it seemed evident that if Poland were left to herself the change would be completely successful.[2]

One letter of Hailes is especially significant. The answer, he said, of the King of Prussia to the letter of

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[1] Hailes to Leeds, May 3, 5. Hailes to Grenville, May 28, June 15, 1791. Record Office.

[2] Hailes to Grenville, June 7, 1791; March 11, 1792. See, too, the account of the Revolution, by Goltz, the Prussian Minister, sent to Grenville by Ewart.

the Polish King announcing the change had just arrived, and it was 'perfectly cordial and satisfactory.' This fact, Hailes remarked, was surprising, as the King, 'two years ago only, was of opinion that nothing could be more contrary to his interests than the establishment of the hereditary succession in Poland, and indeed his expression of similar sentiments to me at Berlin at that time has constantly been uppermost in my mind, and made me apprehensive for the effect of so bold a measure.'[1]

The letters from Berlin were at first equally reassuring. The King of Prussia expressed his satisfaction at what had occurred to the Polish Minister at his Court, to the King of Poland and to the Elector of Saxony. He urged the Elector to accept the succession to the Polish crown; he offered him his alliance, and professed himself fully determined to fulfil his own treaty obligations.[2] The relations of Poland with Leopold were at this time very good, and with a Prussian alliance and a people to an unusual extent united, its prospects appeared to foreigners singularly happy. Burke contrasted the bloodless and beneficent Revolution in Poland with the destructive Revolution in France. Fox described the Polish Revolution as a work in which 'every friend to reasonable liberty must be sincerely interested.' Leeds, representing the English Government, wrote on the subject in friendly though cautious terms. He instructed Hailes not to press any further the cession of Dantzig and Thorn since it was so unpopular. His Majesty, he said, had never meant to urge it except with the full assent of the Polish nation and in return for commercial advantages. It was difficult and by no means desirable for England to give any opinion

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[1] Hailes to Grenville, May 31, 1791.

[2] Ewart to Grenville, May 7, 31, 1791.

on the new Constitution. There could, however, be very little doubt that the peaceable establishment of hereditary monarchy in Poland would be for the good of that country if it was acquiesced in. 'The present situation of the Imperial Courts may render them less likely to disturb at this moment than at any other, a system by which the Government of Poland may acquire that degree of solidity and consistency which have so long been wanting to it.' [1]

This was the first scene of a momentous drama which, as we shall see, soon assumed very different aspects, and blended to a remarkable degree with the course of events relating to France. We must now turn to this latter subject, and trace the causes which led to the great European war.

The multitude of ruined French gentry who had fled beyond the frontier had already found their chiefs, and were beginning to take active measures for preparing their return. A small party had collected round the Prince de Condé at Worms, and another round the Count d'Artois at Turin, but after the departure of D'Artois for Coblentz in the beginning of 1791, and the arrival of the Count de Provence in the following July, Coblentz became the chief centre of the emigration. With the assent of the Elector of Trèves a considerable force was organised and armed, and the exiled princes were indefatigable in their efforts to induce the chief Powers in Europe to take part in a counter revolution. As early as September 1790, the English Minister at Berlin wrote to his Government that they were urging at Berlin, Vienna, and Munich, an invasion of France by the King of Prussia, the King of Hungary, and the Elector Palatine, and that if a counter revolution was effected

[1] Leeds to Hailes, May 25, 1791.

they were ready that Haynault should be given to the King of Hungary, and Alsace to the Elector Palatine, who was in his turn to cede to Prussia the Duchies of Juliers and Berg.[1] In June 1791, new negotiations on the part of the Count d'Artois were carried on at Berlin and Vienna, and shortly after, at the time of the meeting at Pilnitz, D'Artois tried to induce the Emperor to draw the sword by the offer of Lorraine.[2]

Except from England the French princes appear to have met with no positive refusals of assistance, but they found few cordial friends. The King of Sweden, it is true, was eager for the war. He made a journey to Brunswick for the purpose of concerting it with the Duke.[3] He wrote to the Empress of Russia, offering to furnish a corps of 12,000 men with ships to carry them, for the assistance of the French Royal Family, if the Empress would pay the expenses.[4] He made a similar offer to the King of Spain and to the Emperor, and he urgently but vainly begged the Emperor to grant him the use of the port of Ostend as the basis for an expedition against France. Catherine from the beginning strongly favoured an intervention in France, but her chief object, from first to last, was simply to entangle her neighbours in a European war, which might leave her at liberty to do as she pleased in Poland.

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[1] Ewart to Leeds, Sept. 12, 1790.

[2] Sybel, i. 308.

[3] Ewart to Grenville, June 8, 1791.

[4] Whitworth to Grenville, Sept. 30, 1791. Whitworth said, the King of Sweden was acting 'with a spirit of chivalry worthy of Charles XII.' In England, however, he seems to have been less favourably judged. Some time before Whitworth's letter was written, Grenville wrote to Ewart: 'There are circumstances which appear to furnish grounds for an opinion that the King of Sweden has actually engaged in the project of the French counter revolution, and that he looks to that quarter for pecuniary assistance, which seems to be his principal object, and which I imagine there is little prospect of his receiving from the Empress of Russia. (July 29, 1791.)

The question of intervention or non-intervention depended mainly on the two great German Powers, and these Powers had of late been steadily approximating.[1] The movement began during the long and troubled negotiations which preceded tho Peace of Sistova, and which had at one time brought them to the very brink of war. Leopold, though he desired, by supporting Russian pretensions, to modify in his favour the terms which had been agreed on at the Convention of Reichenbach, was unwilling to be dragged into war with Prussia, not altogether pleased at the ascendency Russia was acquiring near his frontier, and perplexed by the growing difficulties on the side of France and the Austrian Netherlands, and he accordingly made secret overtures to the King of Prussia to close their long rivalry by an alliance. The King of Prussia speedily responded. Kaunitz and Hertzberg, who on opposite sides chiefly represented the old traditional antagonism, were kept almost entirely in the dark, and the latter retired from office in July 1791.

The negotiation was largely conducted by the sovereigns themselves, almost without the knowledge of their ministers. It was the object of the King of Prussia by detaching Austria to isolate Russia. Leopold desired to secure peace on the side of Prussia; to free himself from the domineering influence of Russia, and to obtain the assistance of Prussia if it became necessary to intervene in France. Colonel Bischoffswerder, a favourite of the Prussian King, was chiefly employed in the negotiation, and he for some time in a great measure superseded the regular ministers at Berlin. The negotiation began in May 1791, and among the questions considered was the possibility of inter-

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1 See, on the policy of the Emperor at this time, Keith to Grenville, Sept. 10; Oct. 1, 5, 8, 1791; Forneron, *Hist. des Emigrés*, i. 261

vention in France. At Berlin every member of the Cabinet is said to have been at first opposed to such intervention, and the King himself, though he was violently irritated against the French Jacobins, appeared resolved to leave the task of 'mounting the breach' to the Emperor,[1] but it was at last agreed that the two sovereigns should meet at Pilnitz in August, and consider the subject.

The French question had for some months thrown Leopold into a state of great perplexity and hesitation. He was extremely unwilling to involve himself in new complications in the West, while the Eastern question was still unsettled, and he had a great dislike and contempt for the Count d'Artois, and the other leaders of the emigration. The part, indeed, which these personages were playing was a very strange one. They were endeavouring, without the smallest authority or countenance from their own sovereign, to provoke an invasion, and even a partial dismemberment, of France. The King of France repeatedly wrote to discourage and disavow their proceedings, and in the most confidential letters of Marie Antoinette to her brother, as well as in her conversations with her most intimate friends, there is abundant evidence of the extreme dislike and distrust with which the French Court regarded the plans and conduct of the emigrant princes, and of their constant fear lest an invasion of armed emigrants, or some rash measure due to emigrant prompting, should complete the ruin of the monarchy.[2] On the other hand, the princes regarded the King and Queen as mere puppets in the hands of the revolutionists, and they acted with complete independence. They detested the Queen on account of her supposed sympathy with revolution;

[1] Ewart to Grenville, June 8, July 17, 1791.

[2] Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II. und Leopold II.* pp. 143, 147, 151, 166, 168, 204, 205, 207.

refused to obey the royal orders; deprecated every kind of compromise with the Revolution, and at last, when the King accepted the Constitution in September 1791, they desired that the Emperor should treat that act as equivalent to an abdication, and should recognise the eldest brother of the King as Regent of France.[1]

To all this policy Leopold was strongly opposed. His confidential correspondence with Marie Antoinette, and the correspondence also between the Queen and Mercy, who had formerly been Austrian ambassador at Paris but was now established as Minister Plenipotentiary at Brussels, have both been published, and they enable us to thread with considerable confidence the perplexed maze of the secret policy of the time. In the very beginning of 1791, some form of foreign pressure or intervention was looked forward to by the Court of France as the sole means of re-establishing the royal power. In February, the Queen wrote to her brother: 'Spain has answered us that she would aid us with her forces, if you, the King of Sardinia, and the [Swiss] Cantons would do the same, and would treat together and directly with us with this object;'[2] but the Emperor in reply urged patience, and a temporising policy, and finally declared that it was impossible for him to take any efficacious step in her favour without the assistance of many of the chief Courts in Europe.[3] Mercy wrote more fully explaining the difficulties—a war between Austria and Prussia probably impending; England malevolent and opposed to intervention; the uncertain issue of the Russian war keeping all Europe in perplexity; the danger to the lives of the Royal Family if a foreign intervention took place when they were help-

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[1] Forneron, *Hist. des Emigrés*, i. 286–289, 295.

[2] Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II. und Leopold II.* (Feb. 27, 1791), p. 147.

[3] Ibid. p. 151 (March 14).

less prisoners in Paris. If, indeed, they could escape and place themselves at the head of a powerful body of loyal French troops, the whole aspect of affairs would change. Foreign assistance might then flow in from all sides, and it was even possible that a simple demonstration on the frontiers of France might accomplish the work by giving the loyal party an irresistible impulse and courage.[1] The fact that Bouillé and a considerable body of French soldiers were still faithful, was the brightest spot on the horizon, and the Emperor would gladly mass his troops on such points near the frontier that they would be of use if required. The flight of the Royal Family, which had been long contemplated, and which was at last effected on June 20, was taken in accordance with this policy, and the Emperor promised, if necessary, to place an Austrian force at the service of the fugitives.

Leopold has himself described his policy before the flight to Varennes. It was his object, he said, first of all to dissuade D'Artois from any rash step which might endanger the life of the captive King, and next to form an agreement with the Kings of Spain, Sardinia, and Prussia, the Swiss Cantons and the Empire, to protect the Royal Family of France from violence by a joint declaration, by a military demonstration, and if absolutely necessary by actual force. The unanimous declaration which he desired was impossible, for England refused to join; but he had as he believed secured the support of the King of Sardinia, the Swiss, and the Empire, and he had great reason to expect that of the Kings of Prussia and Spain.[2]

Leopold was in Italy when the flight took place, and the first accounts that arrived stated that though

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[1] Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II. und Leopold II.* pp. 147–150, 152–154, 156–161.

[2] Feuillet de Conches, iii. 373–377.

the French King had been arrested, he had been again released and was in safety at Metz. On the arrival of this news, the Emperor at once declared his intention of giving Lewis an unequivocal support. He directed Mercy, who was then in the Austrian Netherlands, to supply him with money, to publish in the name of the Emperor any declaration to the National Assembly which the King judged necessary, to send Austrian troops to the French frontier, and, if Lewis desired it, even across the border.[1] The truth, however, of the position of the King was soon known, and the Emperor speedily reverted to his former policy. He sent a circular from Padua to the princes of Europe, calling their attention to the outrages to which the French Royal Family had been exposed, and inviting them to meet him for the purpose of taking common measures for securing the freedom of the King of France, and putting bounds to the dangers that might spring from the French Revolution,[2] but in the meantime he positively refused the military assistance against France, which the emigrants and the King of Sweden urgently requested.[3] He proposed, however, a declaration to the National Assembly, threatening a united war against the French unless they set at liberty their King and Royal Family, and re-established the power of the monarch on a reasonable basis; but he professed his unwillingness to act without the assent of England, and he complained that he was not adequately supported by other Powers.[4]

His position was indeed a very difficult one. He

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[1] Feuillet de Conches, iii. 374, 375, 378; ii. 152–155. See, too, his letters to Lewis XVI. and Marie Antoinette when he believed them to be free, in Arneth, pp. 181–184.

[2] Feuillet de Conches, iii. 388–390.

[3] Ibid. pp. 423–427.

[4] Ibid. pp. 430, 431, 434, 435 Sybel, i. 303, 304.

was strongly opposed to an invasion of France, which might open a limitless field to dangerous ambitions. He knew that the Austrian Netherlands were seething with the revolutionary spirit, and had been fatally weakened for the purpose of defence by the dismantlement of the barrier fortresses. But, on the other hand, the question of the feudal rights of the German princes in Alsace was still open. The seizure of Avignon by the French, in July 1791, was a new complication, for Avignon and its territory, though they had long been papal, still retained a nominal connection with the Empire.[1] Revolutionary agitation radiating from Paris, or at least stimulated by Parisian example, appeared in several parts of his dominions. The emigrant princes, the King of Sweden, the Empress of Russia, and above all his own sister, were urging him to action, and he felt that an obligation of affection and an obligation of honour lay upon him.

The letters of Marie Antoinette to her brother, at this time, are painful reading. On July 30 she sent him a long, able, and statesmanlike letter deprecating foreign intervention. The moderate party, she wrote, had obtained an indisputable ascendency in the Assembly. The revolutionary section had been defeated yb a great majority. There was an urgent desire among all moderate men to terminate the Revolution, restore peaceful and normal government, and secure the constitutional changes that had been effected, and with quiet times the monarchy would gradually regain its dignity and much of its authority. A foreign invasion would destroy all these happy prospects, and it would be far more formidable to the invader than was generally imagined. The French army was, it is true,

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[1] For the history of the connection of Avignon with the German Empire, see Coxe's *House of Bourbon*, ii. 705.

deficient in officers and discipline, but the whole country was covered with armed and excited men, who would cast aside every other consideration to defend their soil against the foreigner. It was not an armed intervention, but the confidence and respect of the nation, that the King now needed for the restoration of his dignity, and it was in the power of the Emperor to give him what he required. If at the desire of the French King the Emperor put an end to all fears of invasion, if he set the example to the Powers of Europe of recognising the French Constitution, the whole situation would change. All moderate Frenchmen would at once acknowledge the great service which their Royal House had rendered to the country. The period of passion, panic, and uncertainty would terminate, and Austria, being the first country to recognise the Constitution of France, would become her natural ally.[1]

The letter was sent to its destination, but it was speedily followed by others, chiefly in cipher, in which the Queen passionately declared that she had written only under constraint, and that she would be in despair if she thought that her brother took these for her real sentiments. The dangers of the situation, she said, were incalculable. The wretches who surrounded her were in convulsions of rage, and seeking in every way to attack her. The new Constitution was 'a tissue of impracticable absurdities,' but the King had no power of resisting. He was a helpless prisoner; he could do nothing but make a few criticisms while accepting it, criticisms which would not be attended to now, but which, like the protest he had left behind him when he fled from Paris, might hereafter be appealed to. 'The moment,' she added, 'is terrible, and why are we kept

[1] Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II. und Leopold II.* pp. 188–192.

in total ignorance of all that passes beyond France? At present we must follow a course which diverts suspicion from us, and which may at the same time serve to baffle and overthrow as soon as possible the monstrous system we are compelled to adopt. We have no resource except in the foreign Powers. They must at all hazards come to our assistance. The Emperor must place himself at their head, and he must insist as the first condition that the brothers of the King, and all Frenchmen, but especially the first, keep in the background.' France is infested with 'a race of tigers.'[1]

Such were the influences pressing upon the Emperor, and it was under these circumstances that the alliance with Prussia, negotiated by Bischoffswerder, was concluded. Each Power guaranteed the possessions of the other, and the treaty also contained a formal and unqualified engagement that both Powers would respect the integrity and the freedom of Poland; an engagement that no Austrian or Prussian prince should marry the Princess of Saxony, and a promise that the two Powers would do their best to bring about a European agreement on the French question.[2]

In the memorial which the Emperor had sent from Padua, proposing a Congress and a possible intervention in French affairs, he had expressed a hope that, considering the great cause that was to be defended, all the Powers would renounce every aim of aggrandisement.[3] A recommendation so little in harmony with their prevailing spirit, and also the earnestness with which the Emperor insisted on the concurrence of England, which was most unlikely to be obtained, gave the whole transaction an air of great uncertainty and unreality. As early as March 7, 1791, Mercy, when

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[1] Arneth, pp. 193–198, 203–208.

[2] Sybel, i. 302, 303.

[3] Ibid. p. 304.

discussing with the Queen the possibility of European intervention in favour of the French Crown, had lifted in part the curtain of decorous professions which concealed the real sentiments of the sovereigns. 'It is a generally received principle,' he wrote, 'that the Great Powers do nothing for nothing,' and the pretext of 'reasons of State' is always there to cover their covetousness. His master the Emperor, he said, was the sole example of a sovereign who would promise disinterested support. The King of Sardinia had long had his eye on Geneva, and an extension of his frontier in the French part of the Alps and on the Var would be very gratifying to him, and of little consequence to France. Spain desired some rectification of the limits of Navarre, and this, too, might be easily granted; while the German princes who had feudal rights in Alsace might be gained 'at a small expense.'[1] To Prussia the self-denying agreement proposed by the Emperor was certainly not likely to be satisfactory, and in the English diplomatic correspondence from Berlin we may trace the first signs of the ambitions which were beginning to grow up.

The hope of recovering Alsace for the German Empire was indeed not new. It was an old grievance against the House of Hapsburg that at the end of the war of the Spanish succession it had rejected a peace which would have restored that province to the Empire, because it only offered to Austria, Naples and Sicily in exchange for the crown of Spain, and that in 1738 the Emperor, in order to recover Tuscany, consented to sacrifice the interests of Germany by allowing France to obtain Lorraine.[2] Thirty-two years later Frederick the Great had tried to turn the ambition of the Emperor in this direction, and he even drew up a detailed plan for

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[1] Arneth, p. 149. [2] Sybel, i. 154, 155.

the conquest of Alsace and Lorraine from France.[1] From an interesting secret letter written by Ewart to Grenville, it appears that this scheme was now revived. Ewart describes a long conversation which he had with Count Schulenburg, the Prussian Minister, from which he learned that although Schulenburg himself was much opposed to an intervention with France, the King of Prussia, under the influence of Bischoffswerder and the Duke of Brunswick, had committed himself much more than he at first intended. In the course of this conversation, Ewart continues: 'We considered the two cases stated in the secret despatch to Baron Jacobi[2] of the combination to restore the French monarchy succeeding or failing. Count Schulenburg thinks it would be impossible to subdue France by foreign Powers, and that the attempt would contribute to unite and strengthen the different parties. But, supposing it to be otherwise, he conceived each of the Powers concerned would require an indemnification for their expenses. He thinks the same thing would happen in the case of their failing, as some conquests would always be made, particularly that of Alsace, and probably Lorraine, and that the Emperor would be disposed to keep these provinces, after restoring their rights to the princes of the Empire. The King, his master, would then, he observed, be obliged to require an equivalent, and his great object would be to obtain the Austrian part of Upper Silesia. Some arrangement with the Elector Palatine was likewise alluded to, by which he might receive a compensation in the Netherlands equal to the cession of Juliers and Berg to Prussia. . . . The day after I had this conversation with the Prussian Minister, Mr. Jackson learnt from an indirect source that Colonel Bischoffs-

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1 Sorel, *Question d'Orient au XVIII^me Siècle*, pp. 104, 105.
2 Prussian Minister at Vienna.

werder had actually settled a convention at Vienna for an effective plan of operations relative to French affairs . . . that upon taking Alsace and Lorraine the Prussian troops should remain there, and the Austrians penetrate into the interior provinces of France, and that the Emperor was bound to indemnify his Prussian Majesty in any case.'[1]

The question of armed intervention in France was now considered very seriously in Berlin, and it is evident from the confidential diplomatic correspondence, that the King of Prussia, adopting the views of Bischoffswerder in opposition to those of some of the most prominent of his ministers, was increasingly anxious for such an expedition, while the Emperor recoiled from it more and more,[2] and would have gladly abandoned it if any improvement in the condition of French politics, and in the position of the French Royal Family, could be alleged as a pretext. Bouillé, who, having been compelled to fly from France after the capture of the King, had taken refuge at Coblentz, was now in close co-operation with the German Powers; he furnished them with military intelligence, and he may possibly have sent an interesting account of the state of public opinion in France which exists in the archives of Prussia. According to this paper, more than half France was opposed to the new Constitution. In the country districts the attachment to the Revolution was due to the cessation of the old imposts, and would disappear when it became clear to the peasantry that there was no intention of re-establishing them, and when the banished curés had returned. The small towns were more revolutionary

[1] Ewart to Grenville, Aug. 4, 1791 (most secret). Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, p. 546. See, too, the statement of Burges, who, as English Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, had good means of information, *Bland Burges Papers*, p. 184.

[2] Ewart to Grenville, Aug. 9, 13, 1791.

than the great ones. The 'Ancien Régime' was universally detested, and could never be fully restored. The army was entirely with the people. This was due to the general opinion among the soldiers of the utter incapacity of the King, and to the influence of the Assembly which had raised the pay, relaxed discipline, thrown open the ranks, and diffused amongst the soldiers the sentiment of equality. But the army was now so disorganised that it would not prove more formidable than the National Guard, when it was encountered by disciplined soldiers. At the same time the only way of subduing France was by a general coalition. A partial attack would only increase the evil. France must be surrounded with armies from Bayonne to Dunkirk.[1]

The extreme reluctance displayed by the Emperor in a great measure paralysed the ardour of the Prussian King, and the interview between the two sovereigns at Pilnitz had little result. D'Artois again urged his plans of immediate invasion, and the recognition of the Count de Provence as Regent, but his views were emphatically rejected. A public declaration was, however, issued by the two sovereigns on August 27, 1791, stating that they considered the present situation of the King of France a matter of common interest to all the sovereigns of Europe; that they claimed the assistance of those sovereigns, who would, they trusted, cooperate with the signers of the declaration in proportion to their strength, in order to enable the King of France to establish in perfect liberty the foundations of a monarchical Government, equally in harmony with the rights of sovereigns and the prosperity of the French nation. 'Then, and in this case, their Majesties the Emperor and the King of Prussia were determined to act promptly, under a common agreement, and with

[1] Copy sent by Ewart to Grenville, August 1791.

the forces necessary to obtain the common object which they proposed, and in the meantime they will give such orders to their troops that they may be put without delay into activity.'

To those who believed that sovereigns reigned by a divine right, and were bound to one another by personal alliances, the Declaration of Pilnitz must have seemed natural and legitimate. To those who rejected these doctrines it must have appeared an insult to France and an interference with her internal concerns, which was amply sufficient to justify a war. It at the same time left the action of the sovereigns who signed it so conditional upon the general concurrence of the European Powers that it bound them to nothing, and the Emperor and his ministers constantly alleged the attitude of England as a reason for abstaining for the present from any more active measure.

The English policy, though it suited the purpose of some foreign politicians to describe it as ambiguous and Machiavellian, was in truth from first to last perfectly simple and consistent. From the very beginning of the French troubles it was the determination of Pitt that his Government should take no part directly or indirectly in the internal affairs of France. In public declarations, and in confidential diplomatic communications, in speeches in Parliament and in the most private letters, this policy was uniformly and emphatically announced, and on every critical occasion it was reiterated. Thus, when the news of the capture of the King after the flight of Varennes arrived in England, Grenville at once wrote to the ambassador at Paris: 'I have for the present only to recommend to your Excellency to avoid with the utmost caution any step which may have the appearance of committing the sentiments of this country on any point respecting the internal politics of France, or in support or opposition to any line of

conduct which may be adopted under the critical circumstances of the present moment.'[1] When in 1791 the Chevalier de la Bintinaye brought to England a letter from the Count de Provence to the King, he received an answer which was perfectly unambiguous. It was a formal assurance 'that his Majesty's resolution extends not only to the taking no part either in supporting or opposing the measures which other Powers may adopt, but also to the not influencing in any manner their determination in that respect.'[2]

The close relations established between the King of Prussia and the Emperor, without any frank communication with England, tended manifestly to weaken that Prussian alliance which Pitt regarded as of the highest importance, and Grenville instructed Ewart to express the deep regret of the English Government at the reserve and coldness which had arisen, and their earnest desire to maintain the defensive alliance altogether unimpaired. But he was at the same time instructed that 'it is impossible for him [the King of England] to enter into any stipulations which would oblige him to take a part in the affairs of France, with respect to which he has already declared his intention of observing a strict neutrality.'[3] In order that there should be no possible misunderstanding, Ewart was directed not to accompany the King of Prussia to Pilnitz.[4] In Eng-

[1] Grenville to Gower, June 28, 1791. It is remarkable that Fox at this time wrote earnestly to Barnave and other leading French politicians, dissuading the anti-monarchical party from violence, and warning them 'que si l'Assemblée n'était pas très reservée et très sage non seulement elle compromettroit sa révolution de France, mais aussi qu'elle nuiroit infiniment au parti de l'opposition qui dans le parlement d'Angleterre soutient la révolution Française.' This appears from a letter of Roederer sent by Gower to Grenville, July 17, 1791.

[2] Grenville to Aust (French correspondence at the Record Office), Sept. 20, 1791.

[3] Grenville to Ewart, Aug. 26, 1791.

[4] Ibid. Aug. 12, 1791.

land alone, the circular of the Emperor calling for the advice and assistance of the different Powers in Europe for the protection of the King of France from violence, was met by a distinct refusal. It was the intention of the English Government, they officially replied, to observe on the French question 'the strictest neutrality.'[1]

Keith, who represented England at Vienna, was instructed at the time of the Pilnitz meeting not to introduce any topics relating to France, but if the Emperor or his ministers referred to them his language must be such as to leave no possible opening for misconstruction. He must say that 'during the whole course of the troubles which have so much distracted the kingdom of France, his Majesty has observed the most exact and scrupulous neutrality, abstaining from taking any step which might give encouragement or countenance to any of the parties which have prevailed there, or from mixing himself, in any manner whatever, in the internal dissensions of that country. It is his Majesty's intention still to adhere to this line of conduct, unless any new circumstance should arise by which his Majesty should be of opinion that the interests of his subjects would be affected, and even in that case any measures to be taken by his Majesty would be directed to that object only. With respect to the concert which has been proposed to his Majesty and other Powers by the Emperor, or to the measures of active intervention which appear to have been in contemplation for the restoration of the French monarchy, either on its former footing or at least in a state of more dignity and authority than at present, the King has determined not to take any part either in supporting or opposing them.'[2]

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[1] *Diaries of the First Lord Malmesbury*, ii. 448. Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 260.

[2] Grenville to Keith, Sept. 19, 1791.

Few things are more admirable in the career of Pitt than the fidelity with which he observed this neutrality not only in deeds but in words, and the latter is, perhaps, the more difficult in a free Government, which is largely swayed by popular passions, and in which it is in the power of any member of Parliament to force almost any subject into discussion. In our own generation, when the American Civil War deeply divided public opinion in England, we have seen an English Government proclaiming the strictest neutrality; maintaining it with evident good faith, and preventing by its refusal of concurrence a French intervention which would have almost certainly shattered the American Union; but half the good effects of this neutrality were destroyed by the indiscreet and offensive language of English public men. But no such indiscretion can be attributed to Pitt or to his colleagues, and their speeches up to the close of 1792 are models of what in difficult times the speeches of the minister of a neutral Power should be. Fox, as we have seen, from the very beginning of the Revolution, did all in his power to embarrass their policy by constant and perfectly needless eulogies of the proceedings in France, and by systematically holding them up as a model to Englishmen. On the other hand, Burke had given an anti-revolutionary impulse to opinion which was growing almost daily in intensity. During the Nootka Sound difficulty, when the relations of the two countries were for a time very strained, there was a great temptation to deviate from this neutrality. Hugh Elliot, who, though without any diplomatic position, happened to be in Paris, came into close intercourse with some of the leading members of the Diplomatic Committee which the National Assembly had appointed, and which then governed almost absolutely the foreign policy of France. They expressed strongly their good will to England, and Pitt, who was

most anxious that France should not join Spain, welcomed their overtures. But even then, he insisted that two points were essential to the whole business—the one that the negotiation should be carried on by accredited ministers, the other 'that no assurances shall be given, directly or indirectly, which go farther than that this country means to persevere in the neutrality which it has hitherto scrupulously observed with respect to the internal dissensions of France, and from which it will never depart unless the conduct held there, should make it indispensable as an act of self-defence.'[1]

In the democratic party in France, Pitt's honest efforts to maintain a perfect neutrality appear to have been at this time fully acknowledged, but, as is usual among continental statesmen, motives of the most insidious and subtle nature were continually ascribed to him. Mercy wrote to Marie Antoinette as early as March 1791, that England was the chief obstacle to the re-establishment of royal power in France; that she considered herself secure from the effects of democracy, and that she wished to plunge France into the horrors of Revolution in order to complete her ruin.[2] Sometimes her conduct was attributed to resentment at the part which the French Court had taken during the American Revolution; sometimes to a simple desire to enfeeble a rival; sometimes it was said that 'Mr. Pitt was secretly in the democratic interest, or at least wishes it to exist, in order to make it some way or other subservient to his designs.' The Emperor and the King of Sweden believed, or pretended to believe, that the attitude of England was less

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, ii. 59. This confidential communication was discovered by the Russian ambassador. See Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 267.

[2] Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph und Leopold*, p. 148.

neutral than hostile, and that it would therefore be dangerous for them to support the French King. At the very time when Keith was expressly instructed not to introduce French topics into his conversations with the ministers at Vienna, Calonne imagined that English influence was strenuously opposing the emigrants in that capital.[1]

Reports of this kind were brought under the notice of the English Government both by Burke,[2] and by the French emigrants, but on this side also, Grenville guarded himself against any suspicion of deviating from neutrality. Probably the best view of the real sentiments of the English Government is to be found in the confidential correspondence with Berlin, and in July 1791 Grenville devoted a long letter to the question. Calonne had recently come to England bearing letters from the emigrant princes to the King, and the principal object of his mission was 'to solicit from his Majesty an assurance of his neutrality in the event, which M. de Calonne represents as almost certain, of an attempt being made by the Emperor and other Powers in support of the royal party in France.. But from the circumstances of M. de Calonne's situation,' Grenville writes, 'and from other reasons it was not thought proper to receive M. de Calonne as having any formal power to treat upon these subjects, or to authorise him to convey to the French princes such an assurance as he requested, especially as no communication had been made by the Emperor relative to his intentions on this subject.'

It was the opinion of the Government that it was

[1] See Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 239, 261, 291–302, 318. See, too, the letters of Leopold and Gustavus III. in the collections of Arneth and of Feuillet de Conches. Also Marsh's *History of the Politics of Great Britain and France*, i. 89.

[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 346.

not for the interest of the allied Powers to enter into explanations on this or any other subject till the Reichenbach negotiations were completed and confirmed. As it was likely, however, that peace would soon be made at Sistova; that the Emperor would then be on good terms with the Allies, and that he would interfere with the affairs of France; the time had come for giving an explanation which had been hitherto withheld. 'The measures which the Emperor seems inclined to adopt may be productive of consequences advantageous to the Allies, and on the whole they have no interest in preventing or discouraging his interference in French affairs. But, on the other hand, the King's servants are far from thinking that there exist at present any considerations of sufficient weight to induce his Majesty to commit himself by any co-operation or assistance to be given to the attempts which may be made in favour of the royal cause in France, either by foreign Powers or by any description of persons within that kingdom. The line of conduct which his Majesty is disposed to adopt on this subject is, to observe the most exact and rigorous neutrality in the event of any interference by other Powers in the affairs of France.' England, Grenville says, would gladly enter into alliance with the Emperor in conjunction with Prussia and Holland; and in that case she is quite ready to give such explanations 'as may give his Imperial Majesty a confidence of receiving no interruption from this country in any measures which he may pursue on that subject.' Grenville did not know, and much wished to know, whether Prussia intended to follow on the French question a policy of interference, or the English policy of amicable neutrality; but in any case negotiations should be entered into with the Emperor as soon as peace is made at Sistova. It must, however, be clearly explained that 'the object and stipulations of the al-

liance cannot extend to induce his Majesty to take any part in the Emperor's measures in favour of the royal party in France, although the conclusion of that alliance would afford the strongest additional motive, neither directly nor indirectly to obstruct those measures.' [1]

The instructions of Grenville to the English ambassador at Vienna were very similar. He wrote to him that La Bintinaye, who had been charged with a letter from the Count de Provence to the King, had represented 'that the Emperor alleged to the French princes as a motive for his not taking immediate and active steps in support of their cause, that he was retained by some declaration of his Majesty, from marching any of the troops which were then in the Netherlands, and that he was therefore under the necessity of delaying his measures till he could bring forward that part of his army which had been opposed to the Turks.' If anything of this kind was said at Vienna, Keith was instructed to reply that 'no note or declaration of any sort has passed on the subject between this Court and that of Vienna, since the letter of his Majesty to the Emperor.' It was true, indeed, that in some conversations with the Austrian ambassador, Grenville had spoken of 'the anxiety of this Government for the maintenance of tranquillity in the Netherlands, to the re-establishment of which his Majesty had by his friendly interposition so much concurred, and in the preservation of which he feels that he has a strong interest,' and of the possible danger 'of fresh disturbances if the Imperial army now stationed there was to act on the side of France.' But this was merely urged as an argument to induce the Emperor to bring to a speedy conclusion the constitutional arrangements in the Netherlands, which he had promised and had hitherto delayed. It was never for a

[1] Grenville to Ewart, July 26, 1791.

moment the intention of the English Government to prescribe to the Emperor how many troops were wanted in the Netherlands, or to make any formal representation on the subject. On French affairs the policy of England was 'declared neutrality.' She was determined not only not to second and not to oppose any measure the Emperor might take, but also not to attempt to influence his decision by any advice. There is strong reason, Grenville said, to believe that he 'has no longer the same desire of interfering in the affairs of France, which he had a short time since,' and that he is making use of the English conversations as a pretext for inaction. 'It is by no means his Majesty's wish to take any step for altering his Imperial Majesty's disposition on this subject, whatever it be.' He only wishes it to be clearly known that he has himself maintained, and that he will maintain, 'the most strict and scrupulous neutrality on the subject.' Keith as usual is directed to abstain from introducing the subject, but if it was introduced, this was to be his answer.[1]

In their communications with Burke, the ministers showed much reserve, and Burke was for a time so doubtful of their dispositions, that he cautioned his son not to trust them with any secrets relating to the French princes. The fear of French faction in England, he said, was disappearing from their minds. They seemed wholly indifferent to its prevalence in other countries, and they were much governed by the opinions of their ambassadors. The Court and the majority of the people, he had no doubt, were opposed to the Revolution, but Burke was by no means certain that the leaning of the ministry was not in its favour. Dundas, however, positively assured him of their determination to be strictly neutral, and Dundas wrote to the same effect to Richard Burke.

[1] Grenville to Keith, Sept. 27, 1791.

'The line of the British Government,' he said, 'to adhere to an honest and fair neutrality being taken and everywhere announced, it is impossible for any member of Government to give way to the indulgence of any speculations on the subject of French affairs. I had a visit from your father this morning, and I took occasion to express to him my surprise at the contents of your last letter: never having heard, and at this moment not believing, that this country ever interfered directly or indirectly to prevent the Emperor moving any of his troops in any manner he pleased.'[1] Edmund Burke himself had several conversations with Pitt, and fully recognised that there was no moving him from his idea of 'a neutrality,' 'a very literal' neutrality.[2]

It is impossible to resist the force of this evidence. The Emperor in September 1791 informed Bouillé that he had received replies from all the Powers he had addressed on the French question, assuring him of their co-operation, 'with the exception of England, which is resolved to preserve the most strict neutrality,'[3] and the French Minister of War in the following month, in a report enumerating in great detail all that had been done by different Powers in Europe hostile to France, made no charge of any kind against England.[4]

During the whole of 1791, and, indeed, until the closing months of 1792, French affairs occupy a curiously small place in the correspondence of Pitt and of the other ministers,[5] and Lord Auckland, who had lived long on the Continent, was greatly struck with the general indifference to foreign politics. Ewart returned to England in November 1791, and Auckland says,

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 224, 265, 266, 268, 274, 336.

[2] Ibid. pp. 343, 347.

[3] Marsh's *Politics of Great Britain and France*, i. 86.

[4] Ibid. pp. 40, 41.

[5] See the remarks of Rose, on Pitt's correspondence at this time. *Diaries and Correspondence*, i. 108.

'He thinks that on coming home, he will be listened to respecting foreign politics. He will be astonished to find that nobody here enters into such subjects.' 'This indifference to foreign affairs,' he wrote five months later, 'is general through the kingdom. You may find it even in our newspapers; perhaps it may be justly attributed to the great prosperity of the country, which confines all attention to interior and insular details.'[1] Lord Malmesbury was persuaded that it was 'the fixed opinion' of Lord Grenville, 'that we should not interfere at all in the affairs of the Continent.'[2] Pitt was generally believed to know and care less about foreign politics than about any other department of administration, and all his correspondence shows that his thoughts were at this time mainly directed to commercial extension, to financial reform, and especially to the reduction of the debt. The two great ends of his foreign policy were to prevent disturbances in Europe and to multiply commercial treaties, and he was fully convinced that a long period of peace lay before England.

Opinions on the French Revolution greatly differed, but the one point on which the vast majority of statesmen agreed, was that for a long period France was not likely to be aggressive. 'The state of France,' wrote Pitt, at a time when the Revolution was still impending, 'whatever else it may produce, seems to promise us more than ever, a considerable respite from dangerous projects.'[3] 'From France,' wrote Lord Malmesbury, two years later, 'I fear very little. Its situation puts it as a Power quite out of the line, and it is not worthy to be reckoned either as a friend or foe.'[4] By strength-

[1] Auckland's *Correspondence*, ii. 392, 398.

[2] Malmesbury's *Correspondence*, ii. 441.

[3] Rose's *Diaries and Correspondence*, i. 85. This was written in Sept. 1788.

[4] Malmesbury's *Correspondence*, ii. 437, 468 (Oct. 1790). See, too, Auckland's *Correspondence*, ii. 377.

ening as much as possible the internal resources of England, Pitt and his colleagues believed that she must rise steadily and spontaneously in the European system. It is a curious illustration of the spirit of his Government that at a time when the complications of the Continent were rapidly thickening, one of his great preoccupations appears to have been the arrival of a few shipwrecked Japanese at St. Petersburg. In a long, anxious, and able despatch, which though signed by Grenville was probably written by Pitt himself, he represented to Whitworth the extreme importance to the East Indian dominions of the King, of making use of the occasion to form some commercial connection with Japan; and Whitworth was directed to employ all his efforts to induce the Japanese to go to London, where their presence might 'possibly lead to consequences in the highest degree advantageous to the commercial interests of this country.' He was directed to negotiate with the Empress on the subject, but as the Empress was not likely to consent, the object must be disguised, and some pretext, such as the convenience of embarking in Holland, must be invented. This is perhaps the only instance in the Government of Pitt of a diplomacy which was not perfectly straightforward.[1]

I have dwelt long on this subject, for in order to judge fairly the causes of the outbreak of the war of 1793, it is necessary to ascertain what were the dispositions of England when the great struggle first began on the Continent. It is, I believe, absolutely impossible to study the evidence with candour without acknowledging that, up to this time at least, the English Government was thoroughly pacific, and that the neutrality which it

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[1] Grenville to Whitworth, April 20, 1792. Whitworth was not able to succeed, for special orders were given to keep the Japanese from all contact with Englishmen and Dutchmen, May 18, 1792. Whitworth to Grenville.

professed was a sincere neutrality, honestly professed and faithfully observed. If Pitt had any designs of aggression, the opportunity was not wanting, for in the French navy insubordination and disorganisation were at their height, and the great negro insurrection at St. Domingo in the summer of 1791 almost led to the total destruction of that important French colony. In their extreme distress the colonists appealed for assistance to Lord Effingham, the Governor of Jamaica, who saved them from almost certain massacre by sending to their assistance three English frigates with ammunition, and his conduct received the full and formal approbation of the British Government.[1]

Though he made no efficient effort to prevent it, the language of Ewart at Berlin tended to discourage Prussia from embarking in a war with France,[2] and the evident reluctance of the King, in his capacity of Elector of Hanover, to support any warlike policy, was one of the reasons alleged by the Emperor for shrinking from the contest.[3] There is, indeed, little doubt that the English ministers sincerely regretted the continental war. In a conversation with Burke shortly before it broke out, Pitt and Grenville observed 'that they had now in Europe a situation in which it never stood before and might never be again—a general peace among the Powers, and a general good disposition to support the common cause of order and government.'[4] They feared new troubles in the Netherlands, which lay within the sphere of English interests; they profoundly distrusted the Emperor, and they entirely rejected Burke's estimate of the dangers and even of the importance of the Revo-

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[1] Marsh's *Politics of Great Britain and France*, i. 43–57.

[2] See Eden to Grenville, Feb. 14, 1792.

[3] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 240, 260, 261. Keith to Grenville, Dec. 31, 1791.

[4] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 345.

lution. After a long conversation with Pitt and Grenville in September 1791, Burke wrote to his son: 'They seem to be quite out of all apprehension of any effect from the French Revolution on this kingdom, either at present or at any time to come.'[1] 'Do not fear,' Pitt once said to Burke, 'depend upon it we shall go on as we are till the day of judgment;'[2] and he recommended him to praise the Constitution of Great Britain as much as he pleased, but not to attack that of France. The ministers probably agreed with Stanley that the present anarchy could only be very transient, and must lead in a short time to the re-establishment of the monarchy under constitutional limitations;[3] and Pitt, looking on the whole question with the eye of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, believed that a speedy bankruptcy must destroy the credit of the Assembly and terminate the crisis.[4] So little danger did he fear from France, that almost to the eve of the great struggle which lasted for more than twenty years, he was reducing the armaments of England.

The attitude of England was very little calculated to disturb or influence that of other Powers; but the attitude of Catherine was very different. She had just concluded her Turkish war, and was able to turn her energies to the destruction of the new Constitution and independence of Poland. This now became her main object, but in order more easily to attain it, it was her first desire to embroil the Emperor and Prussia with

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[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 344, 345.

[2] Pellew's *Life of Sidmouth*, i. 72. 'Very likely, sir,' Burke answered. 'It is the day of no judgment I am afraid of.' In politics, Burke once said, he was sometimes 'most afraid of the weakest reasonings, because they discover the strongest passions.' Letter to Sir H. Langrishe.

[3] Auckland's *Correspondence*, ii. 380.

[4] Burke's *Correspondence*, iii. 345.

France. She received with the utmost warmth the emigrant princes. She issued a circular to all the princes of Europe, calling them to take arms for the common cause of monarchy. She appealed specially and vehemently to the honour of the two German sovereigns, and she lost no occasion of protesting the ardour of her enthusiasm for the royalist cause in Europe. It was unfortunate for these protestations, Whitworth somewhat sarcastically observed, that the two revolutions of the century which had been most favourable to the cause of hereditary monarchy—the Revolution in Sweden and the recent Revolution in Poland—had both found in the Empress the most implacable enemy.

Those, however, who will read the letters to Grimm, in which Catherine expressed, apparently without a shadow of reserve, her opinions about the Revolution, will, I think, agree with me that the English ambassador somewhat underrated her sincerity. She had, I believe, a real interest in the royal cause, a real pity for the Queen of France, and a strong dread of the contagious influence of the Revolution in Europe. She was quite ready to take some part as a member of an anti-revolutionary confederation, but she was never likely to allow her enthusiasm to divert her from the objects of her own ambition. In one of her confidential letters she very frankly said: 'I am breaking my head to make the Cabinets of Vienna and Berlin intervene in the affairs of France. I wish to see them plunged in some very complicated question in order to have my own hands free. I have before me so many enterprises not finished. It is necessary that these two Courts should be occupied, in order that they may not prevent me from bringing them to a good ending.'[1]

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[1] Sybel, ii. 142.

Poland by herself was wholly unable to resist her powerful neighbour. The great constitutional changes which had been recently effected, had indeed been carried with admirable unanimity, and they promised the best results; but very little had been done to put the country in a condition of security. With an indefensible frontier, a governing class by no means destitute of real patriotism, but corrupted and divided by a long period of anarchy and foreign intrigue, an army wholly inadequate to the wants of the nation, and a peasantry cowed and broken by repeated Russian invasions and occupations, the safety of this unhappy country was certain to depend for some years on the abstinence or the assistance of its neighbours. In Leopold, Poland had a real friend. In spite of the participation of Austria in the first partition, the long alliance between the two countries, strengthened by the community of faith, was not forgotten, and Leopold, in the spirit of a true statesman, recognised the importance of interposing a powerful kingdom between Muscovite ambition and Western Europe. Prussia also was attached to Poland by every engagement that could bind the honour of a nation. She had guaranteed the integrity of Poland. She had bound herself by a solemn treaty to prevent any foreign interference with her internal concerns. She had entered into alliance with her. The Prussian King had been the first to express his gratification at the recent changes in her Constitution. He had reiterated his assurances of friendship again and again. He had quite recently entered into a new agreement with the Emperor to respect the integrity and the Constitution of Poland, and to induce the Elector of Saxony to accept the hereditary crown.[1] If public faith was

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[1] See Sybel, i. 307, 311.

more than an empty name, Poland seemed likely to find powerful supporters in her difficulties.

It is one of the chief interests in reading history in original diplomatic despatches, that it enables us to trace almost from the beginning the rise of great questions, which first appear like small clouds scarcely visible on the horizon, and gradually dilate and darken till the whole political sky is overcast. The earliest clear notification of what was impending, which was received by the ministers in England, appears to have come from a secret despatch of Ewart written in August 1791. He relates a long conversation with Count Schulenburg, the Prussian Minister, chiefly about the concerns of France, but in the course of it there was a digression on Polish affairs which must have afforded the ambassador grave subject for thought. Schulenburg described himself as much pleased that the Emperor had guaranteed the integrity of Poland; but he expressed his belief that this would be of little use against the ambition of Russia; that Russia having obtained an advantageous port on the Black Sea, would be confirmed in the idea of fixing the seat of empire there; that the Emperor, finding it impossible to stop the ambition of Russia, will find himself obliged to participate in some plan for the partition of Poland, and that Prussia will not be able to avoid joining.[1]

Ewart was soon after recalled from Berlin and replaced by Eden, a brother of Lord Auckland. A few extracts from his confidential despatches will carry us further in our story.

At the end of November he wrote: 'In several of my letters from Dresden I informed your lordship of the express orders sent to the Prussian Minister there, to remove if possible the apprehensions entertained at that

[1] Ewart to Grenville (most secret), Aug. 4, 1791.

Court of the evils which might arise to Saxony, should the Elector accept the offered succession to the crown of Poland. This line of conduct appears contrary to that ever pursued by his late Prussian Majesty, who looked for his own aggrandisement from the anarchy of Poland. The Dutch Minister now tells me, that he has good reason to believe that the instructions given to M. de Luchesini are to endeavour to replunge that country into the anarchy from which it is scarcely emerged.'[1]

The more Eden saw of Prussian statesmen, the worse he augured for the future of Poland. The Court of St. Petersburg, he says, will never be brought to any favourable declaration, and the King of Prussia refuses to give a formal guarantee to the new Constitution, 'alleging that that assurance which he had already given of his approbation, when it was communicated to him, proceeded merely from his personal regard for the Elector.'[2] That sovereign was still procrastinating, and it is believed that he will not accept the succession to the Polish throne until the three Powers give their consent.[3]

'With regard to Poland,' Eden wrote a little later, 'I shall briefly state that though there may be no actual concert, yet it appears to be equally the system of the three Courts to prevent that kingdom from rising into consequence. The Polish Minister at Dresden boasts, I understand, of his country being assured of the good will and protection of his Prussian Majesty; yet the language of his ministers to me has uniformly been, that his Majesty's approbation of the new Constitution was in as much only as it regarded the choice of the Elector. . . . They expect the Elector's silence or his refusal will produce a perfect anarchy in Poland, and

[1] Eden to Grenville, Nov. 26, 1791.

[2] Ibid. Dec. 3, 1791.

[3] Ibid. Dec. 3, 5, 1791.

they add that as the Poles formed their Constitution without foreign intervention, they must be left to themselves to accomplish it. I should observe that the little bickerings relative to trade which the Poles have imprudently too much given rise to, will strengthen the arguments of those who think the aggrandisement of this country can be secured only by the anarchy and spoils of that unhappy kingdom.'[1] 'The Poles must not expect any support from hence. Even the friendly professions of this Court towards Poland ceased, from the moment that all appearance of war with Russia was at an end, and her assistance was no longer wanted.'[2]

As the probabilities of war with France increased, the situation became more clearly defined. Count Schulenburg observed that 'he did not suppose her Imperial Majesty would give a decisive answer to the communication of the Court at Warsaw, nor to the pressing instances of the Elector; but that she would order the troops to be withdrawn from Moldavia and Wallachia, to be stationed on the frontier of Poland to encourage the malcontents; that new confederacies will be formed, and anarchy with its usual train of ills ensue. He added that the Elector was aware of this, and would not venture to accept the crown.'[3] A week later Schulenburg said to Eden 'that it was evidently the Empress's intention to station her troops on the frontiers of Poland, that she might encourage her partisans and foment the divisions in that country.' 'I have uniformly,' Eden continued, 'described to your lordship the disposition of this Court as no longer favourable to the Revolution, since the appearance of a rupture was at an end, and I stated that the general opinion here is that Prussia can alone look for aggrandisement from the

[1] Eden to Grenville, Dec. 17, 1791.

[2] Ibid. Jan. 3, 1792.

[3] Ibid. Feb. 7, 1792.

spoils of that unhappy country. In the Act signed at Vienna its present limits are indeed fully guaranteed. This I fear will prove but a feeble barrier; and if Russian troops overrun the country and the Empress proposes a new partition, plausible arguments will easily be found for the political necessity of its being accepted. Resistance even would be difficult, if this Court and that of Vienna be once fully embarked in the prospect of an armed negotiation with France, for as in that business it does not appear probable that the Empress can take any effective part, she will be left the sole arbiter of the fate of Poland.'[1]

This consideration was undoubtedly one of those which made the Emperor especially reluctant to embark in a French war, and the acceptance of the Constitution by Lewis XVI. appeared to furnish a valid reason for relinquishing the enterprise. It was, indeed, the opinion of a great part of the European world that this acceptance substantially closed the Revolution. On September 14 the King went down in state to the Assembly to swear to the Constitution, and he returned to the Tuileries accompanied by the members, through a vast and applauding multitude.[2] An amnesty was granted on the occasion, for all offences connected with the Revolution; and the King, in the opinion of the English ambassador, did everything in his power to win popularity, and to convince the people that the course he was pursuing was voluntary. The Tuileries were twice splendidly illuminated. The King and Queen drove through the Champs Elysées to see the illuminations which the municipality had ordered. They appeared, for the first time since the Revolution, at the opera and in the theatres. They sent 50,000 livres to be

[1] Eden to Grenville, Feb. 16, 1792.

[2] Gower to Grenville, Sept. 14, 1791.

distributed among the poor. The King wrote official letters to all the sovereigns of Europe, notifying his acceptance of the Constitution, and he wrote a long and earnest letter to the emigrant princes, urging them to abstain from any measures that could indicate hostility to it, or lead to foreign invasion or civil war.[1] When the King closed the Constituent Assembly on September 29, he was received with enthusiasm, and one of the last acts of this body had been to decree that the members of any club or other society which should oppose any act of legal authority should lose for two years the rights of French citizenship.[2]

But in spite of these reassuring signs, a careful observer could easily discern the growing dangers of the situation. It was an ominous proof of the little confidence felt by serious men in the permanence of the new Constitution, that the funds fell when the King signed it.[3] All the chief municipal posts in Paris were passing into the hands of Republicans,[4] and when Bailly, in November, ceased to be Mayor of Paris, he was succeeded in that great office by Pétion, a vehement and intolerant Jacobin. Lafayette had resigned the command of the National Guard, which was then divided under six commanders, and it could no longer be counted on to support the cause of order. Over a great part of France there was a total insecurity of life and property, such as had perhaps never before existed in a civilised country except in times of foreign invasion or successful rebellion. Almost all the towns in the south—Marseilles, Toulon, Nîmes, Arles, Avignon, Montpellier, Carpentras, Aix, Montauban—were centres of republicanism, brigandage, or anarchy. The massacres of

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[1] See Feuillet de Conches, ii. 328–336.

[2] Gower to Grenville, Sept. 9, 14, 16, 23, 30; Oct. 7, 1791.

[3] Gower to Grenville, Sept. 16, 1791.

[4] Ibid. Nov. 18, 1791.

Jourdain at Avignon, in October, are conspicuous even among the horrors of the Revolution. Caen in the following month was convulsed by a savage and bloody civil war. The civil constitution of the clergy having been condemned by the Pope, produced an open schism, and crowds of ejected priests were exciting the religious fanaticism of the peasantry. In some districts in the south, the war between Catholic and Protestant was raging as fiercely as in the seventeenth century, while in Brittany, and especially in La Vendée, there were all the signs of a great popular insurrection against the new Government. Society seemed almost in dissolution, and there was scarcely a department in which law was observed and property secure.

The price of corn, at the same time, was rising fast under the influence of a bad harvest in the south, aggravated by the want of specie, the depreciation of paper money, and the enormously increased difficulties of transport. The peasantry were combining to refuse the paper money. It was falling rapidly in value, and month after month Lord Gower sent the English Government estimates of the vast excess of national expenditure over national income. The new Legislative Assembly, which met on October 1, filled sober men with alarm. All the experienced politicians who sat in the Constituent Assembly had been disqualified. The elections had begun amid the excitement caused by the flight to Varennes. They were conducted with the utmost violence and directed mainly by Jacobin clubs, and it was soon evident that the Republican party, which in the first Assembly was said not to have numbered more than seven members, was about to obtain a great prominence.

In the meantime the stream of emigrants continued unabated, and it included the great body of the officers of the army who had been driven from the regiments

by their own soldiers.[1] Bouillé, one of the best French generals, was among them. The greater part of the Irish regiment of Berwick had left its garrison at Landau, and gone over to the Prince de Condé.[2] At Brussels, Worms, and Coblentz, emigrants were forming armed organisations. On September 10, when the intention of the King to accept the Constitution was well known, the King's brothers published a letter to the King, protesting against that Constitution, declaring their belief that if the King accepted it this would be only through compulsion, denying his right to sacrifice the ancient prerogatives of the French monarchy, and threatening France with invasion.[3]

And while the emigrant leaders were holding this language, nearly all Europe seemed arming. Spain appears to have been the first to have excited serious alarm, for Florida Blanca, who then directed its affairs, was in complete sympathy with the emigrants. In August 1791, Lord Gower mentions the efforts of French ministers to allay the alarm arising from this quarter. 'They own,' he says, 'that the Spanish ministers will not treat with their minister at the Court of Madrid; they acknowledge the defenceless state of that frontier and the impossibility of sending any number of regular troops into that part of France, owing to the greater necessity for them in other parts of the kingdom; they acknowledge also the danger of trusting some of the regular regiments on the frontiers; they have been obliged, for instance, to order into the interior part of the kingdom the regiments of Berwick and Nassau, or rather what remain of those regiments, lest the fancy should take them to join their fellow-soldiers on the other side of the Rhine, and a total want

[1] Gower to Grenville, June 3, 10, 1791.
[2] Feuillet de Conches, iv. 135.
[3] Bourgoing, *Hist. Dipl. de la Révolution*, i. 398.

of subordination will render useless the regiment of Auvergne which is now at Phalsbourg.'[1] The negotiations between the emigrant princes and foreign Powers were only dimly suspected, till the Declaration of Pilnitz flashed a sudden light upon the hostile dispositions of Europe. The Emperor was believed to be more desirous of war than he actually was. Prussia had a great army ready for the field. The Empress of Russia and the King of Sweden were ostentatiously preaching a crusade against revolutionary France. The Kings of Sardinia and Spain were likely to be on the same side, and suspicions were now industriously circulated that England, the old rival of France, was secretly negotiating the alliance between Austria and Prussia, and, without avowing her policy, had become the real soul of the league.[2] When the news arrived of the negro insurrection at St. Domingo, it appears to have been at once attributed to English machinations.[3]

These suspicions, as we have seen, were absolutely unfounded, and I have already adduced abundant evidence, which might be still further increased,[4] of the sincerity of English neutrality, and even of the great indifference of English ministers to foreign affairs. But, as is usually the case, England was suspected on

[1] Gower to Grenville, Aug. 19, 1791.

[2] Lacretelle, *Précis de la Révolution*, pp. 58, 59.

[3] Gower to Grenville, Oct. 31, 1791.

[4] I have quoted the language of the English ministers to their ambassadors at Paris, Vienna, and Berlin. In Sept. 1791, when Woronzow, the Russian ambassador in London, made an appeal to the English Government respecting the affairs of France, Grenville answered that 'from the beginning of the French troubles his Majesty had invariably observed the strictest neutrality respecting them, abstaining from mixing himself in any manner whatever in the internal dissensions of that country, and that with respect to the measures of active intervention which other Powers might have in contemplation, it was his Majesty's determination not to take any part either in supporting or in opposing them.' Grenville to Whitworth, Sept. 27, 1791.

both sides, and on opposite grounds. In September, Marie Antoinette expressed her belief that English influence was being secretly exerted for the ruin both of the Emperor and of the Royal Family of France,[1] and Mercy, in whom she placed the greatest confidence, steadily encouraged the idea. This diplomatist, during a short journey to England in August 1791, had seen the King, Pitt, Burke and Grenville, and he came back with his unfavourable impressions only confirmed. 'Foreign assistance,' he wrote to the Queen, 'will be of no avail unless England shares all the chances; her neutrality is not sufficient, and there is little appearance of her departing from it.'[2] He wrote to Kaunitz that the affected silence maintained on political matters by Pitt and Grenville during his interview with them, 'seemed a new proof that it was the decided system of the Cabinet of St. James's to observe a passive and free attitude in the events of France, so as to derive advantages for herself from the measures on which the other Powers may decide;' and he believed that, in spite of her enormous prosperity, discontent was rapidly gaining ground in England, and that she was menaced by the same doctrines and the same dangers as France.[3] In other letters he accused the English Government of dissuading Spain from joining the alliance against the Revolution, and of throwing every obstacle in her power in the way of the coalition.[4]

Another element of anxiety was the deep and by no means unfounded distrust of the King and Queen, prevailing in France. Could it be doubted, it was asked, that their sympathies were with a league which was formed for the restoration of the royal prerogatives,

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[1] Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph und Leopold*, p. 209.
[2] Feuillet de Conches, ii. 244.
[3] Ibid. ii. 274.
[4] Arneth, pp. 214, 231.

promoted by the brothers of the King, directed by the brother of the Queen, and supported by the head of the Spanish Bourbons? In truth, after the flight of Varennes and the total destruction of the chief prerogatives of the French Crown, the monarchy under the existing sovereign had become impossible, and it would have been probably a wise policy to have at once changed the form of government, or at least placed a new sovereign on the throne. The King sincerely dreaded civil war and foreign invasion, but if he accepted the Constitution it was only because he deemed it inevitable, and with a full conviction that it would be impracticable and ruinous to the country.[1] He objected to most of the proceedings of the emigrants, and especially to their designs of making an armed incursion into France; but as early as July 1791 he gave powers to his brothers to negotiate with foreign sovereigns for the restoration of order and tranquillity in France, though he at the same time added his hope that force might be kept in the background.[2] The Queen, who played a far more active and important part in the political correspondence of the time, never for a moment seriously accepted the Constitution, and never abandoned the hope of foreign intervention. We have already seen the sentiments she expressed in the weeks that followed the flight of Varennes, and her confidential letters show that during the whole of the latter half of 1791, while she dreaded and detested the emigrants and deprecated any immediate invasion, she still placed her one hope of safety in a European Congress supported by an armed force.

On September 8, only a few days before the King formally accepted the Constitution, she sent the Emperor a remarkable memoir clearly indicating her policy

[1] Arneth, p. 218. [2] Feuillet de Conches, ii. 156.

and her hopes. The Constitution, it was argued, cannot possibly endure, and the danger of an immediate civil war was extreme. It was the first object of the King to avert such a calamity, and he was therefore inflexibly opposed to an invasion of France by the emigrants or to a declaration of Regency, either of which measures would infallibly produce it. At the same time nothing but armed foreign intervention could possibly restore France to tranquillity, and Europe to safety. The present condition of France, says the writer, is altogether unparalleled. The King has no liberty. A frantic minority is ruling by undisguised terrorism. All the ancient forms and modes of administration, all the traditions and habits of the nation, have been destroyed, and the disturbing influence of the Revolution will certainly not be confined to France. Its principles are of a nature to incite all nations against their sovereigns, and to sap every constitutional authority. It has established a great centre of political propagandism. Its emissaries have taken a leading part in the troubles in Brabant, and have endeavoured to sow seeds of anarchy in Switzerland, Holland, Turin, Rome, and Spain. The whole public system of Europe will be endangered or ruined if the monarchy of France is subverted, for by such a catastrophe all the treaties, engagements, and alliances of France will be cancelled, and left at the mercy of an armed democracy, governed by abstract notions of the rights of men, hostile on principle to all monarchies, and perfectly disdainful of the compacts of the past. Nor is this all. There is a tacit agreement among nations that a certain proportion must be maintained between their armies, and no sovereign can be allowed to increase his forces to such a point as to become a menace to his neighbours. But the present armaments of France are beyond all ancient and modern example. The revolutionary chiefs have armed and

equipped no less than four millions of men, in addition to the troops of the line, which amount to 150,000 men on a peace footing, and to more than 250,000 men on a war footing; and all citizens under sixty are to serve in the National Guard. If such a force was properly disciplined, and suffered to acquire the organisation and consistency of a regular army, no Power in Europe would be safe.

It is impossible, the memoir argues, that such a state of affairs could be indifferent to the continental Powers. Those Powers ought clearly to lay down the principle that they will not attempt to interfere with the internal government of France except so far as it affected its neighbours. But it was a vital interest to the public system of Europe that France should continue a monarchy; that her monarch should maintain the freedom necessary for contracting and enforcing engagements; that her institutions should not be established on principles and maxims subversive of all the settled Governments of the world. To maintain this policy a Congress of the European Powers, supported by overwhelming force, should be employed, and the writer of the memoir hoped that without the necessity of actual warfare such a demonstration would be sufficient to restore the monarchy to its proper place in the Government of France.[1]

The same policy was persistently maintained by the Queen in her later letters. 'There must be a demonstration,' she wrote, 'of armed forces, or at least preparations for the march of troops. I am sure that if the Emperor showed himself thus the other Powers will not hesitate.'[2] 'I insist on an armed Congress. . . . It alone can stop the follies of the princes and the

[1] Feuillet de Conches, ii. 287–309. See, too, Bourgoing, *Hist. Diplomatique de la Révolution*, i. 400.
[2] Arneth, pp. 219, 220.

emigrants, and I see on all sides that there may soon be such a degree of disorder here, that every one but the Republicans will be delighted to find a superior force able to bring about a general settlement. But let my brother be well persuaded that all the ostensible steps we are obliged to take are the consequence of our position; that we must at any price win the confidence of the majority here, but that we neither will nor can keep to a Constitution which would be the calamity and the ruin of the whole kingdom. We desire to arrive at a tolerable condition of things, but this cannot be established by the French. The spirit of party rules exclusively on both sides. It is therefore necessary that the Powers should come to our assistance, but in a manner both useful and imposing.'[1]

The Queen, however, soon saw with great bitterness that there was little hope of the assistance she asked. 'Since the almost unqualified acceptance [of the Constitution] by the King,' wrote Mercy, in November, 'foreign Powers have evidently grown somewhat cold about the affairs of France.'[2]

Kaunitz sent a circular to the different Courts to whom the Emperor had appealed, stating that the free acceptance of the Constitution had essentially changed the situation, and that the King and monarchy of France were no longer in any immediate danger.[3] The plan of a Congress of the Powers was rejected at Vienna, and Marie-Antoinette complained with much pathos of her abandonment, and of her almost complete ignorance of the intentions of her brother.

The Legislative Assembly fully justified the fear of those who anticipated that it would consist mainly of violent, ignorant, and incapable men, swayed to and

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[1] Arneth, p. 226. [2] Ibid. p. 221.
[3] Bourgoing, *Hist. Diplomatique de la Révolution*, i. 404.

fro by mobs, and Jacobin clubs, and childish rhetoric. The most conspicuous fact in its composition was the almost complete absence of the old privileged orders, who had borne so large a part in the previous Assembly. The majority of the members were petty advocates or petty writers without fortune or distinction. They began by voting, by a large majority, that when the King came down to open formally the Session he should not be addressed by the terms 'Sire' and 'Majesty,' or suffered to sit on a gilt chair; but next day, probably because it became known that the King under these circumstances would refuse to take part in the ceremony,[1] they rescinded their vote. The first serious legislation related to the emigrants and the refractory priests. The Constituent Assembly in the preceding June and July had forbidden any one to pass the frontier without passports, and had subjected every Frenchman who did not return to France within an assigned period to a triple taxation; but when the Constitution was completed these measures were revoked, and the Assembly asserted that it was the constitutional right of every Frenchman to leave the country, as well as to travel in it without restriction.[2] In October, however, the King wrote a letter to his brothers, summoning them to return to France, and he issued at the same time a proclamation against the emigration, and sent letters to the same effect to his commanders by land and sea. The Legislative Assembly took much stronger measures. By one decree it summoned the eldest brother of the King to return to France within two months on pain of losing

[1] Bertrand de Molleville, *Annales de la Révolution*. According to Lord Gower, the revocation was due to the sudden fall in the funds caused by the decree. Gower to Grenville, Oct. 7, 1791.

[2] Laferrière, *Hist. des Institutions et des Lois de la Révolution*, p. 249.

all right to the Regency. By a second decree the French princes and all other Frenchmen assembled beyond the frontiers were declared suspected of conspiracy against France, and were condemned to death and confiscation of their property unless they returned before January 1. By a third decree all the priests who had hitherto refused to take the civil oath which was condemned by the Church, were deprived of the pensions which the previous Assembly had granted them. The first of these decrees received the sanction of the King, but to the second and third he opposed his veto, and the result was that in November 1791 the King and the new Chamber were already at enmity.

The question of emigration, however, being brought into such prominence could not be neglected, and it was soon evident that, unlike the Constituent Assembly, the Legislative Assembly contained a strong party desirous of war. That it should have been so was not surprising, for the European sovereigns had undoubtedly given to France a kind and degree of provocation which no powerful monarchy would have accepted with patience, and their attitude, which was in reality menacing, appeared much more so to perfectly ignorant and inexperienced legislators who had at their command scarcely any of the secret information of a regular diplomatic service. Montmorin, indeed, who still for a short time held the portfolio of foreign affairs, was a skilful and experienced statesman, and he was fully convinced that since the acceptance of the Constitution the principal Powers of Europe had given up every idea of war against France, and that although the hopes of the emigrants were kept alive by vain and conditional promises, they would receive no real support.[1] When the King informed the different Powers of Europe that

[1] Bertrand de Molleville, *Annales*, Oct. 1791.

he had accepted the Constitution, the Kings of Spain and Sweden and the Empress of Russia refused to acknowledge this acceptance as the act of a free agent, and the Swedish and Russian Ministers soon after left Paris on an indefinite leave of absence; but the answers of the other Powers, if vague, were at least amicable and reassuring, and Montmorin, on the last day of October 1791, presented to the Assembly a report on the relations of France with foreign Powers, in which he showed in detail that the position had very greatly improved.[1]

The key-note of the situation lay in the fact, which is established beyond all doubt, that the Emperor now fully shared the opinion of Kaunitz, and was determined to do the utmost in his power to avoid a war with France. Such a war he clearly saw would lead to two of the events which he most dreaded, a revolutionary explosion in the Austrian Netherlands, and a Russian invasion of Poland; and the new Constitution seemed to him to furnish a sufficient pretext for abstaining. Neither Spain, nor Naples, nor Sardinia, nor the smaller German Powers, were in the least likely to take any part against France except as very subordinate members in a great coalition. The King of Sweden could do nothing without subsidies, which no one was inclined to give him. The Empress of Russia wrote, ardently hoping that the Allies had not abandoned the French princes, and proclaiming her readiness to exert herself vigorously in their cause; but it was tolerably clear that she would not risk a man or a rouble in the enterprise unless the two German Powers embarked in it. The King of Prussia, who was now greatly separated from his own ministers, and very much under the influence of Bischoffswerder, appears to have regretted the acceptance of the Constitution by the French King, and

[1] Bertrand de Molleville, *Annales*, appendix.

to have really desired a war; but he distrusted the Emperor, and was perfectly resolved not to engage in a French invasion without his assistance, especially at a time when a new Polish question was impending. The armed emigrants were much fewer and much more imperfectly equipped than was supposed in France, and without foreign support they were little to be feared.

Under these circumstances the confidential diplomatic correspondence of Europe, which for some weeks after the flight of Varennes had indicated rapidly approaching war, pointed in September, October, and till near the end of November, with a striking unanimity to peace. If France desired it, or if the decision was still left in the hands of the Emperor, it would almost certainly have been preserved. But the tide in France, impelled by many and very various influences, was now beginning to run violently in the direction of war.

According to the official view, which prevailed in nearly all the Courts, Cabinets, and armies of Europe, France was at this time almost helpless, and certainly totally unfit to encounter a European coalition. The facts of the situation were few and simple. The French army, which had lately been incontestably the first in Europe, was now utterly disorganised, nearly all the higher officers having been expelled by their own soldiers, and all obedience and subordination having ceased. The fleet, which had been greatly improved by Lewis XVI., and which was only second to that of England, was in a very similar state. The finances were so disordered that speedy bankruptcy seemed inevitable, and there was scarcely a department which was not in a condition of anarchy or even of civil war. To suppose that a country so situated could encounter with any prospect of success the settled Governments and great disciplined armies of Europe, seemed to most statesmen absurd.

There was, however, another order of considerations,

which, though at this time generally neglected, in reality governed the event. It was true that the French army was in a condition of extraordinary disorganisation, but it was also true that there never had been a period in which so large a proportion of the nation was under arms, acquainted with at least the rudiments of the military art, and at the same time wound up to the highest pitch of excitement. Those who know French character, know how quickly in a great emergency Frenchmen can acquire the habits and capacities of military life; how large a part the element of enthusiasm bears among the conditions of their military success, and how easily strong passions when once excited among them take new forms and directions. In spite of the multitude of officers who had fled to Coblentz, France was still rich in military talent, and the army was full of excellent subordinate officers, who were thoroughly capable of higher commands, and well aware that a war would open to them fields of ambition much like that which the Fire of London had given to the architectural genius of Wren. All restrictions on promotion having been abolished, and almost all the superior officers having been removed, there seemed a boundless prospect to an ambitious and capable soldier. A great war under such conditions could hardly fail to stimulate to an unexampled degree military enthusiasm, enterprise, and talent, and it was the one remaining chance of restoring the tone and discipline of the army.

Bankruptcy, again, if it took place when the nation was at peace, would be manifestly due to the Revolution, and it might completely discredit it; but bankruptcy incurred in a desperate struggle against united Europe would have no such moral effect, and was not likely even to check the impetus of the war. A settled Government, depending mainly on the owners of property, will calculate carefully material consequences,

and will shrink from too serious sacrifices of the present resources and future prospects of the nation. But the new French Government could not be judged by the ordinary methods of political calculation, for it was fast passing into the hands of men who were wholly unconnected with property, who were at violent enmity with the wealthier classes, who shrank from no measure of confiscation or violence, who were absolutely indifferent to every end except the triumph of their cause. It was possible, too, that the very excess of anarchy into which the country had fallen, and the apparent hopelessness of repressing it, might lead many to desire a foreign war, which, by giving a new vent or channel to the passions of the nation, might enable it to throw off the internal fever that was consuming it.

Nor was there any difficulty in exciting a military enthusiasm. It was only necessary to say—what was partly true—that France was surrounded by despotic Powers who were conspiring with the Royal Family and the anti-revolutionary classes against it on account of its Revolution; and to add—what was wholly false—that they intended to reimpose on the French peasantry the feudal and ecclesiastical burdens which had been abolished. The danger seemed the more imminent from the obscurity that hung over the dispositions of the different Courts in Europe. The attitude the French Chamber had assumed towards monarchy and monarchical institutions had excluded French diplomatists from all intimate and confidential intercourse with foreign Powers, and public opinion was therefore left, unguided and unchecked, to its own suspicions and alarms. It was not likely that an armed and excited nation would remain passive in such a position, and of all nations France was the least likely to do so. No nation can meet approaching dangers with a swifter, a fiercer, a more tiger-like spring, but no nation is con-

stitutionally less fitted to endure the tension of long-continued and inactive suspense. Besides this, as Burke had long warned the world, the Revolution was an essentially cosmopolitan thing, aiming at a fraternity of nations, and the subversion of all ancient Governments. Such a movement passed easily into a military phase. To carry the torch of liberty through benighted Europe was now preached as the mission of France, and if kings and armies were leagued against her, she was to look to insurgent nations for her allies. There was at least little doubt that it needed but a spark, to throw the Austrian Netherlands into a flame.

With these considerations, motives of national ambition were blended. Such motives did not, indeed, occupy a foremost place in the revolutionary movement, but it would be an entire mistake to suppose that they were ever altogether absent. The implacable hatred with which Marie Antoinette was pursued, was not wholly due to the extravagance of her Court or to her supposed hostility to the Revolution. It was also industriously fomented by politicians who regarded the daughter of Maria Theresa as the chief support of that Austrian alliance which it was their main object to dissolve. Through the whole of the Revolution there were a few able and cool-headed men who were never dupes of the passions which they flattered and stimulated, but who saw in them a great force that might be directed to the attainment of old objects of French ambition. To such men it was no immaterial circumstance that the country which was likely to be most quickly revolutionised by French ideas, was the country over which, for more than a century, French statesmen had most desired to establish their ascendency and dominion.[1] If

[1] On the steady persistence with which French policy was directed to the acquisition of the Belgic provinces, see Sorel, *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, pp. 319–322.

Austrian Flanders could become French, a capital object of French ambition would be attained, and if French armies could overrun Austrian Flanders, they were not likely to stop there. One of the most humiliating defeats which French policy had of late years undergone, had been the overthrow of the French party and influence in Holland, and there is some evidence that as early as 1791 the prospect of restoring them had been conceived.

It was a daring game, but the men who took the most prominent part in the Legislative Assembly were not men from whom any prudence or measure could be expected. Obscure young provincial lawyers, petty writers of no antecedents or character, adventurers and fanatics without any reputation or position to lose, without any practice in affairs or any serious political knowledge, had climbed into the foremost places, commanded the wealth and power of France, and found themselves able to defy the sovereigns of Europe. Was it surprising that they should have proved arrogant and reckless, eager for adventure, ready like desperate gamblers to risk everything on a throw?

There was also one clear and definite calculation among them. The most energetic section of the Assembly desired to overthrow the new Constitution, which had in their eyes the great fault of maintaining the monarchical form of government. If, however, a war with the Emperor was declared, it was scarcely possible that the monarchy could continue. The relations of the Queen to the Emperor would make the position of the Court intolerable. A war of nations against sovereigns, it was calculated, would speedily turn France into a Republic, and give the more violent party a complete command of the Ministry.

The Republican party, however, was divided on this question. Robespierre, Couthon, and their friends,

feared that a war might concentrate new powers in the hands of the King, and that a victorious invasion might shatter the Revolution; but the party of the Gironde, which had now obtained the ascendency under the guidance of Brissot and Vergniaud, vehemently advocated a war, and Brissot has himself acknowledged that his main object in pushing it on was to overthrow the monarchy.[1] The French tribune began to ring with passionate appeals to arms, with denunciations of the kings and Governments of Europe, with predictions of the coming war between insurgent nations and despotic sovereigns. As late as October the Austrian Minister had replied to one of the appeals of the King of Sweden that 'all thoughts of active interference in the affairs of France on the part of his Imperial Majesty were entirely laid aside,'[2] and in accordance with this policy the Emperor had in August forbidden any enrolments of French emigrants in his dominions, and in October had ordered the dispersion of emigrants who had assembled in too great numbers at Ath and Tournay.[3] The Electors of Trèves and Mayence, however, still suffered French emigrants to arm in their dominions, and on November 29 the Assembly passed a decree calling on the King to demand their disbandment within a short period, on pain of war, and requesting the Emperor to enforce the demand. They at the same time urged the King to settle the claims of the German princes on the lines indicated by the Constituent Assembly; and to change the diplomatic agents who had not efficiently represented French demands.[4]

These demands were not in themselves unreasonable,

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[1] See a remarkable passage from one of his pamphlets, quoted in the *Annual Register*, 1792, part i. p. 273.

[2] Keith to Grenville, Oct. 8, 1791.

[3] Taine, *Hist. de la Révolution*, ii. 129, 130.

[4] Bourgoing, i. 421. Sybel, i. 326, 327.

but they were accompanied by speeches of the most violent provocation against the sovereigns of Europe. The country was rapidly arming; Narbonne, the young Minister of War, showed extraordinary power and promptitude in organising three armies under the command of Rochambeau, Luckner, and Lafayette; and a manifesto clearly foreshadowing war was addressed to all the Courts of Europe. Refugees from the Austrian Netherlands were received with ostentatious favour, and all the language and proceedings of the dominant party in the Assembly proved that they were not only ready but eager for war.

The French King considered that he had no alternative but to yield to the wishes of the Assembly. Montmorin, who represented the policy of peace, resigned, and soon after a great number of changes were made in the diplomatic body. On December 14, the King announced to the Assembly that in accordance with their decree he had summoned the Elector of Trèves to put a stop, before January 15, to all enrolments on pain of immediate war, and that he was about to write to the Emperor desiring him if necessary to exert his authority as head of the Empire to avert the miseries which the conduct of some of the members of the Germanic body, if not speedily altered, must necessarily produce. An immense war credit was voted, and a French army marched to the German frontier.

But while the King was thus apparently consenting to the wishes, and making himself the mouthpiece, of the dominant party in the Assembly, his secret wishes and policy were very different, and he now for the first time formally and in person requested the assistance of foreign Powers against his subjects. On December 3, he wrote to the King of Prussia, stating that in spite of his acceptance of the new Constitution there was a manifest determination in the Assembly to destroy

altogether what remained of the monarchy; that he accordingly addressed the King of Prussia, the Emperor, the Russian Empress, and the Kings of Spain and Sweden, and that he suggested to them a Congress of the chief Powers of Europe supported by an armed force, as the best means of stopping the factions in France, making it possible to establish a better order of things, and preventing the evil under which France was suffering from spreading to the other European Powers. He trusted that the King of Prussia would approve of his ideas, and would at the same time maintain a profound secrecy about this overture.[1]

To the same effect, but in language still more compromising, Marie Antoinette wrote to Mercy on the 16th, only two days after the King had made his declaration to the Assembly. She reminded the Austrian ambassador that ever since July she had been asking for a Congress of the Great Powers of Europe, but that her brother had hitherto abandoned her. Even now, however, it was not too late, and the fate of the Royal Family in France was in his hands. He had seen how the Assembly in its late message had invited the King 'in a manner to declare war against the Electors and princes of Germany;' how the King had taken the only course open to him in declaring that he would comply with the wishes of the Assembly, and how he had assured them that if in the fixed period he did not receive the satisfaction which he demanded it would only remain for him to propose a war. 'No comment is necessary,' the Queen proceeded, 'to show the folly of this step. Without army, or discipline, or money, it is we who wish to attack. But the King is not free. He must obey the general wish, and for our personal safety here, it is necessary for him to follow

[1] Feuillet de Conches, iv. 269–271.

exactly the course which is prescribed to him. It is for the Emperor and the other Powers now to help us. . . . It is at this moment that an armed Congress appears to us likely to be of the greatest use. Let my brother not deceive himself. Sooner or later he will be mixed in our affairs. First of all, if we are fools enough to attack, he will be obliged as chief of the Empire to support the Germanic body, and moreover, with soldiers as undisciplined as ours, his territory will soon be violated on all sides. It is no longer time to fear for our persons. The course which we have adopted here, of appearing to move frankly in the direction they desire, places us in safety, and the greatest danger of all would be to remain always as we are. . . . There is no longer any time to procrastinate. The moment to help us is come. If it is missed there is no more to be said. The Emperor will then only have to accept in the eyes of the whole universe the shame and the reproach of having suffered his sister, his nephew, and his ally, to be dragged through the very depths of humiliation when it was in his power to have saved them.'[1]

The situation of the Emperor was very perplexing. His anxiety for peace cannot reasonably be doubted. The reader will remember the letter deprecating foreign interference which the French Queen had written after the acceptance of the Constitution, at the dictation of the constitutional party; and he will also remember the passionate manner in which the Queen, almost immediately after, wrote to her brother declaring that this letter did not contain her real sentiments, that she had written only on compulsion, that she placed all her hopes on foreign assistance. She now complained bitterly that her brother had taken no notice whatever

[1] Arneth, pp. 231-235.

of these latter letters, while the former letter had been made use of all over Europe as a justification of his neutrality.[1] But in addition to foreign Powers, the German Diet was now pressing upon the Emperor, urging him to support the claims of the princes to their rights in Alsace, and beginning manifestly to resent his passive endurance of the insults of the French Assembly,[2] and the French Royal Family were almost as much prisoners as after their capture at Varennes. The Emperor, indeed, in his interviews with the emigrant princes appears to have denied this,[3] but he was well aware of the fact, and he was exceedingly alarmed lest new outrages should force him to intervene.[4] He was also probably troubled and irritated by learning that Ségur had been sent from Paris to Berlin, if not to obtain a Prussian alliance for France, at least to detach Prussia from Austria.

The Prussian King, it is true, entirely rejected the French overture, but there was an uneasy and suspicious feeling at Vienna.[5] The menace and the influence of the Revolution were beginning to be felt even in very remote parts of the Austrian dominions. 'The tiers état in several of the provinces of this monarchy,' wrote Keith, 'are extremely urgent in their solicitations to the Emperor to obtain the right of sending representatives from their body to their provincial States. A deputation from the peasantry of Styria has been sent hither with a petition to that effect, which the Emperor has referred to the Bohemian Chancery, with orders to each councillor of that board to deliver to his Imperial Majesty his opinion in writing and sealed. . . . The example set by Styria will probably be followed by the

[1] Arneth, p. 232.

[2] Ibid. p. 228.

[3] Keith to Grenville, Dec. 8, 1791.

[4] Ibid. Dec. 17, 1791.

[5] See on Ségur's mission, Arneth, p. 237. Eden to Grenville, Jan. 10, 14, 21, 1792.

other countries in the Emperor's dominions.'[1] The Austrian Netherlands were evidently on the verge of revolt under the influence of French example and incitements, and a French irruption into the territory of the Empire might at any time take place. 'If,' wrote Keith, 'to these events the near prospect of a war in Poland should be added (which appears to me far from improbable), the wisdom as well as firmness of the Austrian Cabinet will be put to hard trials.'[2]

Under these circumstances, the Emperor tried to strike out a middle course which would at once support his dignity, satisfy his allies, and make it not wholly impossible to preserve the peace. He sent the most urgent and peremptory directions to the Elector of Trèves, and to the other minor German princes, to put an end to all enrolment, organisation, and assembling of French emigrants in their dominions; and his injunctions were so fully carried out, that in January the French Minister at Coblentz informed his Government that this grievance had been entirely removed. On the other hand, the Austrian Chancellor officially informed the French ambassador at Vienna that any act of violence to the Elector would be immediately repelled by an Austrian force. The Emperor, he said, had full confidence in the moderate intentions of the French King, but he had daily reason to fear that those intentions might not be respected, and he therefore, while officially informing the French Government that all armed assemblies of emigrants had been dispersed in Germany, as they had previously been in the Austrian Netherlands, thought it necessary to inform them also, that Marshal Bender had received orders to give the Elector effectual assistance if he were attacked. The

[1] Keith to Grenville, Dec. 21, 1791.
[2] Ibid, Dec. 24, 1791.

Emperor also wrote a letter to the French King, reminding him that the feudal rights of the German princes in Alsace and Lorraine, which had been swept away by the French Chamber in August, had never been subject to the sovereignty or legislation of France; that they had been expressly reserved in a long series of international treaties; that they had been placed under the protection and guarantee of the German Empire. He protested against the decree of the National Assembly as an arbitrary usurpation and violation of the rights of the Empire, and he declared his full resolution of supporting the German princes and the Diet, if they did not obtain a full restoration of their property and rights, as settled by treaties.

He also sent a declaration to the different Courts of Europe suspending and explaining away the Declaration of Pilnitz. The measures, it said, taken by the allied Powers at that time, had been taken on the supposition that the King of France was a prisoner. But the situation had changed. The Emperor considered that the King of France should now be deemed free, and consequently his acceptance of the Constitution and all the acts which had ensued from it as valid. He hoped that the acceptance of this Constitution would restore order to France, and raise the moderate party to power. As, however, it was possible that the former excesses and violence might be renewed, he considered that the Powers should hold themselves in a state of observation, and cause their respective Ministers at Paris to declare that their alliance still exists, and that they will be ready on every occasion to support in concert the rights of the King and of the French monarchy.[1] On January 5, 1792, almost identical notes were presented at Paris by the ambassadors of the Emperor and

[1] Bertrand de Molleville, *Annales*, Dec. 1791.

of the King of Prussia, declaring that if, in spite of the determination of the German princes to maintain in their territory the regulations relating to the emigrants which were in force in the Austrian Netherlands, the German territory was violated, the two sovereigns would consider this proceeding a declaration of war against themselves.[1]

These measures left the French Assembly a very large practical latitude. If it wished for war, the feudal claims of the German princes and the attempted or threatened interference with French affairs furnished obvious grounds. If it desired peace, the complete concession of the demands about the emigrants paved the way, and the other questions might easily be submitted to negotiations, which in the present disposition of the Emperor would almost certainly be successful. The French were at the same time clearly informed that the attempt to disunite the two German Powers had failed, and that both must be encountered in the event of a war.

There was soon no doubt of the alternative which was preferred. Brissot, Isnard, and other Girondins who now led the Assembly, at once attacked the Emperor with a fury of invective which could scarcely be surpassed, and they openly advocated immediate war. 'The one calamity to be feared,' said Brissot, 'is that there should not be a war.' 'There can be no sincere treaty between tyranny and liberty. Your Constitution is an eternal anathema to despotic thrones. All kings must hate it, for it tries them and it sentences them;' and his answer to the treaties which were cited in support of the feudal rights of the German princes was that the 'sovereignty of the people is not bound by the treaties of tyrants.' The Diplomatic

[1] Bourgoing, i. 450, 451.

Committee, in a report which was presented to the Assembly on January 14, called upon the King to exact from the Emperor before February 10, and on pain of immediate war, a distinct promise to do nothing against the French nation and its independence, and to assist France in accordance with the treaty of 1756 against any Power that attacked her, and the Assembly itself on January 25, after several days of the most insulting and frantic denunciation, formally accused the Emperor of having violated the treaty of 1756 by promoting a coalition against France, and called upon the King to demand, in an interval which was now prolonged to March 1, a full explanation and satisfaction, on pain of war.

This debate and vote made peace impossible. The Emperor, indeed, determined that he would still endeavour to temporise, but the preliminary treaty of July, between Austria and Prussia, was at once converted into a close definitive alliance, and a united army under the Duke of Brunswick was concentrated on the French frontier. The English diplomatic despatches of the time show very vividly the dispositions of the different parties. 'Nothing short of dire necessity,' wrote Keith, on the last day of 1791, 'will determine his Imperial Majesty to unsheathe the sword in good earnest against France or any other foreign Power,' and Keith described the anxiety with which the Austrian Court sought for pretexts to avoid immediate action, and their repeated and urgent warnings to the minor German princes to avoid any provocation to France.[1] 'I am persuaded,' he wrote a week later, 'that this Court at length conceives imminent danger of a rupture with France, and will proceed to make serious military preparations. . . . With this I remain in the conviction

[1] Keith to Grenville, Dec. 31, 1791; Jan. 7, 1792.

that the reluctance of the Emperor to draw the sword on any account, is in no shape diminished, notwithstanding that he has been heard to say within these ten days, that if the French madmen are determined to force him into a war, they should find that the pacific Leopold knew how to wage it with the greatest vigour, and would oblige them to pay the expenses of that war in more solid coin than their assignats.'[1] No formal proposition had been made on the part of France for the re-establishment of the rights and possessions of the German princes in Alsace and Lorraine, 'who by the Constitution of the Empire are not at liberty to accept any pecuniary compensation for those rights;' but even after the hostile vote of January 25, there was still hope at Vienna that France would propose a territorial indemnification to the princes. 'The Emperor has it extremely at heart to preserve peace with France if it can be done with any degree of dignity and propriety. It is well understood here that the French King has not put a direct veto on the hostile decree of the National Assembly, and that although he has been able to throw a momentary barrier in the way of the democratical impetuosity, he may soon find himself obliged to go all lengths which the madness of that party may dictate.'[2] The King of Spain, Keith reports, had said he could take no more part in French affairs than to form a cordon around his own frontiers, and pay a subsidy to the troops of Russia and Sweden. The chances of Russian and Swedish assistance seemed to the Emperor doubtful and distant. The Imperial treasury was very low; the Emperor would be obliged, if the war broke out, to impose a heavy war tax in the first year; but he still, in the opinion of Keith, hoped to intimidate the French by making his war preparations very public.[3]

[1] Keith to Grenville, Jan. 7, 1792.

[2] Ibid. Jan. 18, Feb. 11, 1792.

[3] Ibid. Feb. 15, 18, 1792.

Among his most serious causes of anxiety were his relations with Prussia and with Poland. Prussia had just acquired the Margravates of Anspach and Baireuth through the resignation of their sovereigns and by right of succession, a good deal to the dissatisfaction of the Emperor,[1] and she was beginning to lean towards Russia in a manner that was not a little disquieting. As I have already remarked, it was the sincere and earnest desire of Leopold that the integrity and independence of Poland should be preserved, and he was perfectly aware that the Empress of Russia was plotting against both. The signature of the definitive Peace of Jassy on January 9, by putting an end to all alarms from Turkey, had left her free to pursue her policy, and on this side of Europe the moment of crisis was at hand.

At this anxious period, when the issues of peace and war were in suspense, Europe was startled in quick succession by three great events—the fall of the Ministry of Florida Blanca in Spain on February 28; the death, after an illness of only two days, of the Emperor Leopold, on March 1; and the assassination of Gustavus III. sixteen days later at a masked ball at Stockholm. Two of these events had a great and immediate effect on French affairs. Florida Blanca had been one of the first, and Gustavus III. had been the most zealous, of the supporters of the emigrants; but Spain, under the Ministry of Aranda, and Sweden, under the Regency of the Duke of Sudermania, now adopted the English policy of complete neutrality. The effects of the death of Leopold were somewhat more complex. An eminently wise, experienced, cautious, and pacific sovereign, in the prime of his powers and in the most critical period of his reign, disappeared from the scene, and

[1] Keith to Grenville, Feb. 8, 1792.

was replaced by a mere boy without knowledge, experience, or talent. War with France, however, had become inevitable before the death of Leopold, and it is not probable that this event even accelerated it. But it gave Prussia an ascendency in the new alliance, and it deprived Poland in the moment of her extreme need of her only friend.

The English diplomatic correspondence shows clearly how quickly the Polish question was coming to maturity. We have seen, in the despatches from Berlin, the evident signs of the great act of treachery which the Prussian King was already meditating, and in April Count Schulenburg informed Eden that he would never admit that Prussia had guaranteed the new Polish Constitution, which he considered contrary to Prussian interests, 'since the Polish monarch, if ever he should become hereditary, might rapidly rise into a very formidable neighbour.'[1] At Vienna, Keith learnt from the Austrian ministers that they had certain knowledge that the Empress of Russia had already sent a large sum of money to her minister at Warsaw for the express purpose of fomenting internal troubles in Poland.[2] and it was the belief both at Vienna and St. Petersburg that the new King of Hungary had Russian sympathies derived from his uncle Joseph.[3] Bischoffswerder had arrived at Vienna shortly before the death of Leopold, and it was noticed that he was in close and constant communication with the Russian Minister, who was an active fomenter of the discord in Poland. 'Should a connection,' wrote Keith, 'be formed between the King of Prussia and the Czarina, the unhappy kingdom of Poland may possibly become the propitiatory sacrifice.'

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[1] Eden to Grenville, April 14, 1792.

[2] Keith to Grenville, Feb. 18, 1792.

[3] Ibid. March 8. Whitworth to Grenville, March 16, 1792.

He observed that there was a growing belief in Vienna that Bischoffswerder was instructed to make an alliance with Russia, allowing the Empress to carry out her designs in Poland; and Keith confessed himself at a loss to reconcile the proceedings of the Prussian favourite 'with the very friendly professions he is constantly making to the Polish chargé d'affaires here, of the upright intentions of the King his master towards the Republic of Poland.'[1]

It was evident that some kind of compact was established between Prussia and Russia, and the terms were beginning to ooze out. 'The first principle,' wrote Keith, 'laid down by these two Courts is that the "intégrité" of the Polish dominions shall be invaribly preserved. For all the rest a very wide scope will be left to the Russian efforts to bring back the government of that country to its ancient form. Your lordship will best judge how much that counter revolution is to be effected without drawing the sword, and whether or not, if the connivance of Austria and Prussia shall be carried so far as to abet that enterprise (though by less violent means), the former ideas of aggrandisement may not once more creep into the Cabinets of the Triumvirate.' Grenville, on the other hand, wrote that many circumstances convinced the English Government that it was the intention of the Empress of Russia to make use of the first favourable opportunity, to overthrow by arms the new Constitution of Poland, and that she was only restrained by the Courts of Vienna and Berlin; and he expressed his earnest hope that this restraint might continue.[2]

At St. Petersburg the extreme and general corruption gave great facilities for obtaining information.

[1] Keith to Grenville, March 7, 10, 14, 1792.

[2] Ibid. March 17. Grenville to Keith, March 26, 1792.

Whitworth, the English ambassador, appears to have been the first who succeeded in discovering the intentions of the Empress. He had once believed that she would content herself with protesting against the new Constitution, but he soon discovered that he had been deceived. 'I have learnt,' he wrote, 'through a very particular but sure channel, that it is the intention of this Court to fall upon the Republic of Poland in the spring with an army of 130,000 men, which will be brought from Moldavia and continue on the frontier till the proper season. . . . Should other neighbouring Powers interfere, as they naturally will, a plan of partition is already framed, and it is supposed will meet with the concurrence, as it will do the convenience, of all three. In this plan Dantzic and Thorn, with a district in Great Poland, are allotted to the share of the King of Prussia. Advantages in the same proportion (the particulars of which the person who gave me the intelligence does not recollect) are made to the Emperor, and there is no doubt that her Imperial Majesty will secure to herself as much as will reduce the remains of the devoted Republic to a state of the most wretched and humiliating dependence, and indemnify herself fully for the expense of the war with the Turks.' Whitworth had reason for believing that this scheme was still unknown to most of the ministers of Catherine, that the Prussian ambassador at St. Petersburg knew nothing of it, and that the chief ministers at Berlin were equally in the dark; but he added, 'I am, however, very much inclined to believe that those most in the confidence of his Prussian Majesty, and particularly General Bischoffswerder, are acquainted with the business, and it is not impossible that even the King of Prussia himself may have been sounded upon it. I have for some time suspected that there has been a mysterious negotiation of some kind or

other on foot between the two Courts, unknown to the Cabinets of either.'[1]

The information and conjectures of Whitworth appear to have been perfectly correct. Goltz, the Prussian ambassador at St. Petersburg, contrived to see an autograph letter written by the Empress during the Turkish war, stating that as soon as this war was over she intended to send a Russian force into Poland, and if the Emperor and Prussia resisted, to bribe them by an indemnity or a partition.[2]

It soon appeared that the scheme was by no means unwelcome to the Prussian King. On March 12, 1792, he wrote a confidential letter to his ministers on the affairs of Poland, which places his intentions beyond dispute. 'Russia,' he said, 'is not far from the idea of a new partition. It would be in truth the best means of restricting the power of the King of Poland, whether he be hereditary or elective, but I doubt whether we can find for Austria a suitable indemnity, and whether the Elector of Saxony, after such a diminution of power, would still accept the crown of Poland. Nevertheless, if Austria could be indemnified, the Russian plan would be always the most advantageous for Prussia. It is well understood that we should gain all the left bank of the Vistula, and that we should be thus perfectly secure on that frontier, which it has hitherto been so difficult for us to protect. Such is my opinion with reference to Poland.'[3]

This letter has been truly described by a German historian, as the death sentence of Poland. It did not, of course, come to the knowledge of the English ministers; but, as we have seen, they were under no illusions about the character and intentions of the Prussian King.

[1] Whitworth to Grenville, Jan. 30, 31, 1792.

[2] Sybel, i. 455.

[3] Ibid. pp. 460, 461.

At Vienna, Keith received the communications of Whitworth without surprise, and he was able to bring strong corroborative evidence. 'I wish,' he wrote, in reporting the matter to Grenville, 'that I could see any ground for supposing that his Prussian Majesty will oppose an effectual resistance to these ambitious views of Russia. . . . That the Court of Vienna has not been an original projector in this new system of depredation, I believe I may safely aver; but where this Court is to find the national vigour or the political virtue to withstand the other Powers, I cannot see.'[1]

In the meantime the inevitable French war was rapidly approaching. The real dispositions of the different parties are clearly disclosed in the correspondence of the time. The King of Prussia, who was governed by Bischoffswerder, by views of military and territorial ambition, and by a violent personal hatred of the Revolution, was resolved upon war; and he pushed on his policy in spite of the opposition of his most experienced counsellors, and especially of Count Schulenburg and General Mollendorf. At Vienna the young Sovereign was more warlike than his father, and war was now generally looked on as inevitable, but it was not contemplated with pleasure. The French decree of January 25, and the despatch which was based on it, arraigning the recent conduct of the Emperor and demanding an immediate explanation on pain of war, could hardly be looked upon in any other light than as an insulting ultimatum, and one of the last acts of Leopold had been to revise the Austrian reply. It was written temperately and in some parts almost apologetically. The French complained that the Emperor had ordered General Bender to repel any attack on the Elector of Trèves.

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[1] Keith to Grenville, April 25, 1792.

It was answered that the Emperor had only taken this step after he had secured the full satisfaction of the French demand for the disbandment of the emigrants, and that he had only authorised his general to draw the sword in case of an actual invasion of German territory, and on the express condition that all provocation to France had ceased. Such a policy was no menace; it was only a fulfilment of his strict duty as head of the Empire. The French complained that by the circular from Padua and the alliance and Declaration of Pilnitz, the Emperor had interfered with their internal affairs, and violated the treaty of alliance of 1756. The Emperor answered that he had taken these measures solely for the support of the French monarch and monarchy, at a time when his brother-in-law and ally was so manifestly a prisoner that he had fled by night from his palace and had been brought back by an armed force, and when the legal Government of France was destroyed by usurpation. No sooner had the King regained his freedom, accepted the Constitution, and thus reconstituted a legal Government, than the Emperor recognised the fact and ordered that all active measures should be suspended. The coalition, however, still existed though it was dormant, for France was still a cause of the gravest European concern. Its justification was found in the enormous French armaments, continued and augmented when the dispersion of the emigrants had taken away every reasonable pretext; in the fury of the republican party, which was seeking to overthrow both the monarchy and the new Constitution; in the manifest determination of the Jacobins to force on a war, contrary to the wishes of the King and, as the Emperor believed, of the great majority of the French nation. To that nation the Emperor now made a solemn appeal against the Jacobin party. In the interests of France as well as of the rest of Europe,

he denounced this pernicious sect as the enemies at once of their King, their Constitution, and the peace of Europe.[1]

Keith has mentioned the curious fact that 'in a moment of extreme deference to his Prussian ally, and with the mistaken hope of intimidating France,' the Emperor added 'with his own pen' to the draft drawn up by Kaunitz, those expressions relating to the Jacobins which so greatly added to the flame in Paris. After the death of Leopold, Bischoffswerder strongly urged upon his successor the policy of immediately declaring war, but Kaunitz resisted, and although military preparations were rapidly pushed on, a few weeks still passed before the sword was drawn.[2]

In France, meanwhile, the movement towards war was sweeping on with resistless impetuosity. The few moderate men who still remained in the ministry and the diplomatic service were now weeded out, and the whole direction of affairs passed into the hands of violent Republicans. De Lessart, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was not only displaced, but impeached on the ground that he had not sufficiently upheld the dignity of France, and Dumouriez took his place. This eminently skilful, daring, and ambitious soldier, while echoing in their extreme forms the shibboleths of the Revolution, had objects of his own which were perfectly distinct. He wished, if possible, to isolate Austria from Prussia, and from the minor German princes, but at all events to provoke a war that would give the Austrian Netherlands to France. The anarchy and excitement of the country were now at their height. Nineteen departments were in a state of open insurrection. Even around Paris the price of corn in the markets was regu-

[1] Bertrand de Molleville, appendix xiv.

[2] Keith to Grenville, Sept. 10, 1792.

lated by great bands of armed peasantry. The National Guard in the southern provinces not only connived at, but assisted in, the destruction and pillage of country-houses; and while the most atrocious murders of functionaries and suspected Royalists were reported from all sides, the Assembly passed an Act of Amnesty in favour of Jourdain and his fellow-murderers at Avignon, and suffered them to return in triumph to the scene of their crimes. A great civic festival was given to forty Swiss soldiers who had been condemned to the galleys for mutiny at Nancy. The monthly deficit in December was above 35,000,000 livres, and it rose rapidly in January and February. At the end of December, Lord Gower stated that 2,100,000,000 of assignats had been already decreed, and that on the best calculation the whole of the national property did not exceed 3,000,000,000. Multitudes of forged assignats were abroad, and in spite of the supplies that were expected from the sale of the forest lands and from a vast confiscation of the estates of the emigrants, the prospect to any statesman formed in the school of a settled Government might have seemed absolutely desperate. But the one wish of the great majority of the Assembly was for immediate war. A despatch was sent to Vienna summoning the King of Hungary at once to renounce all alliances unsanctioned by, or hostile to, France, and to withdraw the troops that menaced her, and the answer being evasive, the Assembly, on April 20, 1792, declared war against him. Only seven members opposed the decree.

In this way the war was begun which for more than twenty years deluged Europe with blood. Before ten days had passed, a French army had invaded the Austrian Netherlands, and within a month a Russian army was invading Poland. For a short time, however, England kept clear of the struggle, and she still looked forward to a long course of political and financial re-

forms. We must now trace the faults and the misfortunes that baffled the hopes of her statesmen, drew her speedily into the vortex, and soon made her the most important member of the great coalition against France.

END OF THE SIXTH VOLUME.

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